

1824

# The Foreign Policy

— OF —

# Great Britain

===== *by* =====

HENRI BOURASSA

PRICE, - - - - 25 CENTS

IMPRIMERIE DU "DEVOIR"

MONTREAL

1915



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## PREFACE

*This pamphlet is a faithful translation of one published in French and reproducing in full a series of articles which appeared in Le Devoir from the 9th to the 14th of September 1914, under the title : A Chapter of History.*

*These articles had been inspired by the reading of the British White Book. They were the object of fierce denunciations but of very little intelligent criticism. When both the British and Canadian Governments decided to republish that valuable document and distribute it broadcast throughout the Empire and the world at large, it never came to my mind that the duty of all "loyal" British subjects was to read it through the spectacles of jingoism and to draw therefrom only such conclusions as suited Imperialists and jingoes.*

*Many occasions I have had of measuring the enormous difference between the sense of liberty, as understood and practised in England, and the arrogant spirit of blind intolerance prevailing in Canada. This time it reached its climax. That Le Devoir should have been suppressed by the Government, and myself put in jail or hanged, has been seriously stated in several Canadian publications. It is still the professed opinion of many worthy patriots.*

*The amusing feature of the situation is that, while my humble appreciation of the part played by Sir Edward Grey in the days previous to the war was held here to be an "infamous calumny", a "disloyal and criminal distortion of truth", with no other object but that of painting Great Britain and the British Government under "the falsest colours", that same appreciation has been considered in France, by cool-headed and thoughtful writers, as being too favourable to the British Foreign Secretary!*

*It is not my intention to apologise or explain. To the fair judgment of intelligent readers, sufficiently informed of the affairs of the world, these pages are submitted in full confidence. With the other brand of readers, — the ignorant, the fanatic, the jingo, who practically control politics and journalism in Canada, — it would be utterly useless to discuss and to argue.*

*It has been thought useful to complete this short study of British policy by adding, as appendices, (1) the text of the Entente Cordiale and the letters exchanged between President Poincaré and King George on the eve of the war; (2) copious extracts from the Debates of the British Parliament, on the Treaty of 1867, under which the neutrality of Luxemburg was guaranteed; (3) a remarkable contribution to the Contemporary Review by Mr H. N. BRAILSFORD; (4) an article from Mr John S. EWART, K.C., which appeared in the Ottawa Citizen, on the 26th of October 1914.*

*Mr Ewart is one of the most eminent jurists of Canada and the British Empire. In his article, the reader will find further evidence of*

the complicated nature of the situation which preceded war. It shows also that there are other Canadians besides the "disloyal Nationalists" to think, first, that the salvation of Belgium was not the main motive of Britain's intervention in the war and, secondly, that the mere crushing of "German militarism" will not settle all matters aright.

Mr Brailsford's article is undoubtedly one of the most thoughtful and illuminating studies of the European situation that have been published since the opening of hostilities. I thought it worth while to comment upon it at length in *Le Devoir* and to reproduce it in full here. Not that I am prepared to endorse all the views expressed by the writer, nor to confirm everyone of his judgments upon past events or his forecasts of the future; but it seems opportune to show the marked contrast between the liberty of appreciation enjoyed and practised in England, even in time of war and under the ban of censure, and the grotesque and stupid intolerance manifested in Canada against everyone who dares think and say that there are many aspects to the situation in Europe; that the Kaiser and his people ought not to bear alone the full and exclusive responsibility for the unchaining of the war dogs; and also, that the annihilation of Germany is not the final solution of the crisis.

My further object in reproducing these various expressions of opinion is to show the danger of developing in Canada a well meant but false sentiment based on the assumption that France and England are allied for ever against Germany.

What would happen in Canada the day England, changing her present course, would enter into a policy of rapprochement with Germany against Russia, and possibly against France — certainly against France, if France stuck to her alliance with Russia?

Naturally, the jingo and Imperialist press and politicians would change their tone at once. They would denounce the "barbarism" of the Slav in the same pitched voice and with the same heroic words now so profusely used against "German militarism".

In the Province of Quebec, nothing would be heard but the "menace" of Schismatic Russia to the Catholic faith. The semi-religious and semi-imperialistic journals would be filled with remembrances of the persecution of France against the Church.

"Deutschland uber alles!" would become the rallying cry of the same "patriots" who now shout: "Vive la France!"

But to the mass of our people, now called upon to fight with their "two Motherlands" against German "barbarism", it would be difficult to explain this change of attitude and policy.

If the intervention of Canada in this war had been based exclusively on the interest of all Canadians, without any distinction of race and creed, to give to the allied nations a free help in proportion to the resources of the country, the transition might have been possible. But the jingoes have not rested satisfied with that. They have made inflammatory appeals to the French Canadians and endeavoured to prove that they have a special duty to perform, because in helping England they are doing good service to France, "their second mother country".

When Great Britain is again the enemy of France, as she was during



*six centuries, how will the French Canadians make their choice between the double duty imposed upon them to-day? Will they be "loyal" to England against France, or to France against England? To which of their "two motherlands" will they lend their sympathy and effective help? The true fomentors of national discords are the short-sighted men who have taken the responsibility of starting this dangerous campaign. If the national unity of Canada is rent in discord within ten years, the responsibility will rest upon them.*

*How much more wise were the truly patriotic statesmen who made Confederation! Faithful to the teaching of tradition, history, constitution and natural law, they had assigned to the people of Canada obligations which corresponded to their rights in the Imperial body politic. The military responsibilities of the colony were measured in proportion to its political autonomy. No other obligation was assumed than that of defending the territory of Canada.*

*Whether England and France fought against each other, as in the days of Napoleon, or together as in the Crimean war, it was easy to keep peace and harmony between the two branches of the Canadian nation: neither was forced to choose between its political allegiance and the voice of blood and race.*

*Whether the new policy, by bringing the motley population of Canada to take an active and bloody part in every conflict of Europe, as the accomplishment of an "Imperial duty", will be productive of the same good results, the future will tell.*

**Henri BOURASSA.**

*Montreal, February 20th, 1915.*

# The Foreign Policy of Great Britain

The British White Book was published in London in the first days of the war and communicated to the Canadian Parliament on the 19th of August. It contains the despatches exchanged, from the 20th of July to the 4th of August, between Sir Edward Grey and the British Ambassadors or Ministers at Paris, Berlin, Petersburg, Vienna, Rome, Brussels and Belgrade. Most of those letters contain summaries of conversations between Sir Edward Grey and the Ambassadors of the Great Powers in London, or brief reports of interviews between the representatives of Great Britain abroad and the Foreign Ministers of the governments to which they were accredited.

On the whole, that correspondence, which includes more than one hundred and fifty letters and papers, constitutes a document of the very first importance for the historian of the future. Read under the light of the conflagration which devours Europe, it offers a vivid interest, not damped even by the cold correction of diplomatic language. Knowing now the tragical failure of all peaceful negotiations, one cannot help feeling a growing pang in reading the evidence of the manifold attempts, sincere or fictitious, at conciliation and appeasement.

On the other hand, one has also a growing admiration for the untiring efforts of the British Foreign Minister to readjust matters, to resume interrupted conversations, to bridge over newly opened chasms. The ground gives way at every point; the moment an obstacle is removed from one place, it shows itself at another. But in spite of all, not a harsh word from the British statesman, not a movement of anger; just one sign of disdainful impatience towards the "travelling French Government" (25)—an allusion to the absence in Russia of President Poincaré and Premier Viviani—and occasional rebukes—all but one (116) couched in the most correct language,—to the close pressure of Russia and France. (\*)

Here and there, a short opening on the distant horizons of history and high politics, such as that reference to the rivalry of the Slav and the Teuton (87).

Once in a while, a tragical lightning, like the word of Mr. Sazonof to Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador at Petersburg: If Great Britain now fails Russia and France, "rivers of blood will flow", and Britain will "in the end be dragged into war" (17);—or Mr. Cambon's warning, of such eloquent and solemn simplicity, to Sir Edward Grey himself: "It could not be to England's interest that France should be crushed by Germany". Do not repeat the "great mistake" made in 1870 (119).

In that correspondence, Sir Edward Grey appears as he is: a cool headed and highly calculating statesman, deprived of all petty vanity, but conscious of his personal strength and his country's power, and deeply impressed with his responsibilities and the supreme interests of his country.

(\*) All figures between parentheses indicate the number of the despatches as classified in the White Book (Cd. 7467).

To maintain the peace of Europe is the sole and immediate object of his constant efforts during that short period. This has been acknowledged by all, and rightly so. But what has not been sufficiently pointed out,—in fact, not at all,—is that the interest of Great Britain has been the supreme, the sole inspiration of that eminent diplomat. To that object he is ready to sacrifice everything else: England's eventual alliances, the salvation of other nations, the protection of the weak, the respect of treaties. As long as he sees the slightest hope of preserving the peace of the world, and, after that hope has vanished, of keeping England out of the conflict, nothing draws him out of his way: neither the pressing appeals of Russia and France, nor the cry of anguish of poor little Luxemburg, smashed under the heel of the Prussian invader, nor even, in spite of the posterior legend, the threatened violation of Belgium. It is only after the game of peace is lost, that, changing hand with marvelous quickness, he takes up Belgium's neutrality to make it the trump-card of the war game.

It was a happy idea of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to suggest the reprinting in Canada of that illuminating correspondence in order to have it distributed freely to the public. The suggestion was accepted by Sir Robert Borden. So much the better. If Canada is to be drawn into the intricacies of Imperial policy,—not, so far, to help in framing it and reaping its benefits, but to bear its consequences,—it is only fair and proper that we, Canadians, should know something of the real motives which guide the framers of that policy. The school of the great British statesmen is a good one.

All Canadians anxious to form their political ideas with some knowledge of facts and to bring their patriotism under the safe rule of reason should read that paper most attentively.

### First Signs of the Conflict

The correspondence opens on the 20th of July, with a letter from the Foreign Secretary to the British Ambassador at Berlin. In that despatch is related a recent conversation between Sir Edward Grey and Prince Lichnowsky, German Ambassador at London. Both statesmen have recognised the necessity of preventing the imbroglio between Austria and Servia from bringing general complications. They also concur in the view that the Russian Government should exercise a friendly action upon Servia (1).

On the 22nd of July, Sir Edward Goschen, British Ambassador in Berlin, wires to Sir Edward Grey that the German Foreign Secretary, Herr Von Jagow, is of the opinion that the "question at issue is one for settlement between Servia and Austria alone, and that there should be no interference from outside in the discussions between those two countries". (2).

On the 23rd, after a conversation with the Austrian Ambassador, Count Mensdorff, on the expected terms of the Austrian Note, Sir Edward sends a long despatch to Sir Maurice de Bunsen, British Ambassador at Vienna. He anticipates with disquietude the possible awake-

ning of Russia's susceptibilities. He foresees the danger of a war in which "as many as four Great Powers of Europe — let us say Austria, France, Russia and Germany —" may be engaged. That a conflict of such magnitude "would be accompanied or followed by a complete collapse of European credit and industry" leaves no doubt in his mind. But of the possible intervention of Great Britain he gives no indication. To Count Mensdorff he merely repeats his previous suggestion to Prince Lichnowsky: — a direct exchange of views between Vienna and Petersburg (3).

On the 24th, the Austrian Note is communicated to the Foreign Office (4). A despatch is immediately sent to Sir Maurice de Bunsen. The danger of the situation rightly appears to Sir Edward Grey to lie in the stiff terms of the Note addressed to Serbia, and especially in the short time-limit given to the Servian Government for a satisfactory reply (5).

On the same day, a long and remarkable despatch comes from the British Ambassador at Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan. I give it in full:

No. 6.

Sir G. Buchanan, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, to Sir Edward Grey. —

(Received July 24.)

(Telegraphic.)

St. Petersburg, July 24, 1914.

I had a telephone message this morning from M. Sazonof to the effect that the text of the Austrian ultimatum had just reached him.

His Excellency added that a reply within forty-eight hours was demanded, and he begged me to meet him at the French Embassy to discuss matters, as Austrian step clearly meant that war was imminent.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Austria's conduct was both provocative and immoral; she would never have taken such action unless Germany had first been consulted; some of her demands were quite impossible of acceptance. He hoped that His Majesty's Government would not fail to proclaim their solidarity with Russia and France.

The French Ambassador gave me to understand that France would fulfil all the obligations entailed by her alliance with Russia, if necessity arose, besides supporting Russia strongly in any diplomatic negotiations.

The answer of the British Ambassador is characteristic:

I said that I would telegraph a full report to you of what their Excellencies had just said to me. I could not, of course, speak in the name of His Majesty's Government, but personally I saw no reason to expect any declaration of solidarity from His Majesty's Government that would entail an unconditional engagement on their part to support Russia and France by force or arms. DIRECT BRITISH INTERESTS IN SERBIA WERE NIL, and a war on behalf of that country would never be sanctioned by British public opinion. To this M. Sazonof replied that we must not forget that the general European question was involved, the Servian question being but a part of the former, and that Great Britain could not afford to efface herself from the problems now at issue.

In reply to these remarks, I observed that I gathered from what he said that his Excellency was suggesting that Great Britain should join in making a communication to Austria to the effect that active intervention by her in the internal affairs of Serbia could not be tolerated. But supposing Austria nevertheless proceeded to embark on military measures against Serbia in spite of our representations, was it the intention of the Russian Government forthwith to declare war on Austria?

M. Sazonof said that he himself thought that Russian mobilisation would at any rate have to be carried out; but a council of Ministers was being held this afternoon to consider the whole question. A further council would be held, probably to-morrow, at which the Emperor would preside, when a decision would be come to.

I said that it seemed to me that the important point was to induce Austria to extend the time limit, and that the first thing to do was to bring an influence to bear on Austria with that end in view; French Ambassador, however, thought that either Austria had made up her mind to act at once or that she was bluffing. Whichever it might be, our only chance of averting war was for us to adopt a firm and united attitude. He did not think there was time to carry out my suggestion. Thereupon I said that it seemed to me desirable that we should know just how far Serbia was prepared to go to meet the demands formulated by Austria in her note. M. Sazonof replied that he must first consult his colleagues on this point, but that doubtless some of the Austrian demands could be accepted by Serbia.

French Ambassador and M. Sazonof both continued to press me for a declaration of complete solidarity of His Majesty's Government with French and Russian Governments, and I therefore said that it seemed to me possible that you might perhaps be willing to make strong representations to both German and Austrian Governments, urging upon them that an attack by Austria upon Serbia would endanger the whole peace of Europe. Perhaps you might see your way to saying to them that such action on the part of Austria would probably mean Russian intervention, which would involve France and Germany, and that it would be difficult for Great Britain to keep out if the war were to become general. M. Sazonof answered that we would sooner or later be dragged into war if it did break out ; we should have rendered war more likely if we did not from the outset make common cause with his country and with France ; at any rate, he hoped His Majesty's Government would express strong reprobation of action taken by Austria.

President of French Republic and President of the Council cannot reach France, on their return from Russia, for four or five days, and it looks as though Austria purposely chose this moment to present their ultimatum.

It seems to me, from the language held by French Ambassador, that, even if we decline to join them, France and Russia are determined to make a strong stand.

In reply, Sir Edward Grey wires, on the 25th, to Sir George Buchanan :

You spoke quite rightly in very difficult circumstances as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government. I entirely approve what you said, as reported in your telegram of yesterday, and I CANNOT PROMISE MORE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT. (24).

The game is now well opened. Sir Edward Grey's first move is to play with Prince Lichnowsky, against the advice of Mr. Sazonof and Mr. Paléologue (\*). In other terms, the British Government looks for an *entente* with Germany, at the risk of displeasing Russia and France, for a division of the Triple Alliance rather than a close action on the part of the Triple Entente.

### Great Britain and the Triple Entente

On the very day that important despatch from Petersburg arrives in London, that is, on the 24th of July, Sir Edward Grey meets in succession the Ambassadors of Austria, France and Italy.

Count Mensdorff explains that the Note to Serbia is "not an ultimatum, but a *démarche* with a time limit"; and that although it might bring a "break off" in the diplomatic relations, and give occasion to "military preparations", it does not necessarily mean that war "operations" will immediately follow an unsatisfactory answer from Serbia. This communication is transmitted at once by Sir Edward Grey to his representatives in Paris and Petersburg (14).

To Mr. Cambon, the British Foreign Secretary gives the information that the German Ambassador, "some days ago", asked him "privately to exercise a moderating influence in St. Petersburg". The answer he proposes to give to Prince Lichnowsky is, that if the difficulty remains confined to Austria and Serbia, "we need not concern ourselves about it"; but if Russia takes a hand in the conflict, he thinks—

—the only chance of any mediating or moderating influence being exercised was that Germany, France, Italy and ourselves, who had not direct interests in Serbia, should act together for the sake of peace, simultaneously in Vienna and St. Petersburg.

To this, Mr. Cambon replies that if there is "a chance of mediation by the four Powers, he has no doubt that his government would be glad to join in it." But the time is short.

"It would be too late after Austria had once moved against Serbia. The important thing was to gain time by mediation in Vienna. The best chance of this being accepted would be that Germany should propose it to the other Powers." (10)

(\* ) French Ambassador at Petersburg.

The warning of the French diplomat deserves to be noted and kept in remembrance. Under the light of ulterior developments, it seems evident that Mr. Cambon saw clearly at once through the situation, and suggested the only intervention capable of producing a *détente* and preventing a general conflict. That Germany would have refused to accede to any such request of Sir Edward Grey and exercise in Vienna the mediation suggested by Mr. Cambon is of course most possible. But in that case, the attitude of Great Britain towards her allies would have been clearer, and the responsibility of the war would then weigh more exclusively upon the Kaiser and his advisers.

The suggested intervention having been neglected, it is legitimate to believe, not that England is virtually responsible for the war, but at least that she has not tried all that she could to prevent a conflict.

In the afternoon of the 24th, Prince Lichnowsky hands over to Sir Edward Grey a Note purporting to justify the attitude of Austria towards Servia and thus defining the views of the German Government:

The Imperial Government want to emphasise their opinion that in the present case there is only question of a matter to be settled exclusively between Austria-Hungary and Servia, and that the Great Powers ought seriously to endeavour to reserve it to those two immediately concerned. The Imperial Government desire urgently the localisation of the conflict, because every interference of another Power would, owing to the different treaty obligations, be followed by incalculable consequences. (9.)

In spite of Mr. Cambon's warning, Sir Edward Grey repeats to Prince Lichnowsky that, "if the Austrian ultimatum to Servia did not lead to trouble between Austria and Russia, [he has] no concern with it." "As far as Russia [is] concerned", he feels "quite helpless". If Russia intervenes, "the only chance [he can] see of mediating or moderating influence being effective", is that the four Powers — Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain — "should work together simultaneously at Vienna and St. Petersburg" (11).

The next day, July 25th, despatches are exchanged between Sir Edward Grey and the representatives of Great Britain in Berlin, Vienna, Paris, Rome and Belgrade. On that day the fate of Europe is practically settled.

In the evening, the British Foreign Secretary and all the Chancelleries of the Great Powers are informed that Servia, while granting many of the demands of Austria, has rejected the most intolerable, and that, unless she surrenders unreservedly, Austria will order the march on Belgrade within twenty-four hours. Sir Edward Grey is warned by Sir Maurice de Bunsen that the acquiescence of Servia to the terms of the ultimatum is "neither expected nor really desired" in Vienna. (20)

In the interval, a new despatch has been received from Petersburg. Mr. Sazonof still insists on the necessity of a joint action, direct and emphatic, of the Powers of the Triple Entente. According to Sir George Buchanan, Mr. Sazonof—

—did not believe that Germany really wanted war, but her attitude was decided by ours. IF WE TOOK OUR STAND FIRMLY WITH FRANCE AND RUSSIA THERE WOULD BE NO WAR. IF WE FAILED THEM NOW, RIVERS OF BLOOD WOULD FLOW, AND WE WOULD IN THE END BE DRAGGED INTO WAR.

I said that England could play the rôle of mediator at Berlin and Vienna to better purpose as friend who, if her counsels of moderation were disregarded, might one day be converted into an ally, than if she were to declare herself Russia's ally at once. His Excellency said that unfortunately Germany was convinced that she could count upon our neutrality.

I said all I could to impress prudence on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and warned him that if Russia mobilised, Germany would not be content with mere mobilisation, or give Russia time to carry out hers, but would probably declare war at once. His Excellency replied that Russia could not allow Austria to crush Serbia and become the predominant Power in the Balkans, and, if she feels secure of the support of France, she will face all the risks of war. He assured me once more that he did not wish to precipitate a conflict, but that unless Germany could restrain Austria I could regard the situation as desperate. (17)

It is seemingly after having had this second intimation of the views of the Russian Government and received the news from Belgrade, that Sir Edward Grey confirmed the answer given by Sir George Buchanan to Mr. Sazonof: Great Britain has no interest in Serbia; she takes no engagement with Russia and France (6 and 24).

To close the chapter of the relations with Russia, let us pass over an interval of forty-eight hours. On the 27th, Sir George Buchanan relates to Sir Edward Grey a third conversation with Mr. Sazonof. The Russian Minister still insists on his suggestion of a joint action of the Powers of the Triple Entente. The British Ambassador has merely repeated his declarations of the 24th: Great Britain cannot pledge herself; she persists in her friendly mediation with the German Government. Sir George goes further: he expresses the hope "that the Russian Government would defer mobilisation ukase for as long as possible, and that troops would not be allowed to cross the frontier even when it was issued". To which Mr. Sazonof seems to have replied rather brusquely that to retard mobilisation in Russia while Austria is arming, is equivalent to giving the advantage to Austria (44).

On the same day, 27th, the Russian Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, declares to Sir Edward Grey "that in German and Austrian circles impression prevails that in any event [Great Britain] would stand aside. His Excellency deplores the effect that such an impression must produce." To this, the British Secretary replies that "this impression ought... to be dispelled by the orders... given to the First Fleet, which is concentrated, as it happens, at Portland, not to disperse for manoeuvre leave." But he takes care to add that this "must not be taken to mean that anything more than diplomatic action was promised." A summary of that conversation is immediately communicated to Petersburg (47).

In the interval, Sir Edward Grey, still in agreement with Prince Lichnowsky, has pursued his scheme of a joint action of Great-Britain, France, Germany and Italy. At one moment, it looks as if he has the whole situation well in hand. Germany has at first accepted the idea in principle (18 and 46). As to France and Italy, there is no doubt: their official acceptance is signified on the 27th of July (49 and 52). The same day, Russia, while rejecting with impatience the counsels of moderation of the French Government, signifies her consent to the mediation of the four Powers (53). But the net-work so patiently woven by the British statesman is torn in an instant by Austria's declaration of war against Serbia and by the decision of Russia to mobilise.

Two despatches from Sir Maurice de Bunsen, both dated July 26th, throw a significant light upon the events leading to the rupture.

In one of these despatches, it is stated that the Russian Ambassador in Vienna has refused to act jointly with his British colleague in order to obtain further delay on the part of Austria (40). This is the more

remarkable in that, according to a Note from the Russian Government communicated to Sir Edward Grey the day previous and immediately transmitted to Sir Maurice de Bunsen, precise instructions had been given to that effect to the Russian Ambassador (26). Was there a secret counter-order from Petersburg?

The other despatch (32) relates a conversation between the British and German Ambassadors in Vienna. According to the German diplomat, war between Austria and Serbia is inevitable and already decided upon. He believes that "Russia will keep quiet during chastisement of Serbia." That neither Russia nor France are "in a condition for facing a war" he is fully convinced.

This arrogant assurance tends to prove that Mr. Cambon was right when he advised, as early as the 25th, the intervention of Germany at Vienna. It also tends to justify the arguments used from the first by Mr. Sazonof and Mr. Paléologue in support of a joint and strong action by the three Powers of the Triple Entente, — which, alas! were far from understanding each other.

It is not only from Paris and Petersburg that counsels of energy come to London. They come from Rome also, as may be found in Sir Rennell Rodd's despatches. As early as the 23rd of July, Sir Rennell informs his Minister that the terms of Austria's Note are already known in Rome, and that the Italian Government has not the slightest doubt that Austria has made up her mind to declare war (38). On the 25th, the warning is repeated; it is even asserted that Austria "intends to seize the Salonica Railway" (19). On the 29th, the Marquis of San Giuliano gives to the British Ambassador an advice identical with the opinion expressed by Mr. Sazonof and Mr. Paléologue: if Germany "believed that Great Britain would act with Russia and France... it would have a great effect" (80). This opinion of the Foreign Minister of one of the Powers of the Triple Alliance, coinciding with that of the representatives of Great-Britain's allies, or rather would-be allies, should have weighed heavily in the scale. Sir Edward Grey thought it preferable to persist in relying upon Germany. The very day he receives this last warning from Italy, he wires to Berlin to thank Chancellor Von Bethman-Hollweg for his conciliatory language and to assure His Excellency of the concurrence of the British Government "in his efforts to secure peace and to avert the calamity we all fear." (77).

\* \* \*

This marks the end of the first act of the tragedy. It may be summed up in a few words: from the first sign of storm, the British Secretary, even before he has consulted the would-be allies of Great Britain, takes hand in the game in partnership with the German Ambassador. The pressure of Russia he rejects without hesitation. The advice of Mr. Cambon and Mr. Paléologue he sets aside; to the warning of Italy he pays no attention.

Two days after Austria has declared war against Serbia, he is still negotiating with Germany (80 and 90).

The least that can be said is, that, three days before the general conflagration, the Triple Entente was very precarious. That the Entente Cordiale itself hung by a thread we will see presently.



## Great Britain and the Entente Cordiale

On the 29th of July, Sir Edward Grey communicates to Sir Francis Bertie, in Paris, the relation of his latest interview with Mr. Cambon. To the French Ambassador he has explained that the present difficulty is "quite different" from the Agadir incident. In the case of Morocco, Great Britain was bound by "a special agreement" with France, — and, he might have added, by her own determination not to let Germany establish a naval basis opposite Gibraltar. In the present case, Great Britain is free. She has no interest to interfere between Austria and Servia, nor even between Austria and Russia.

It would then be a question of the supremacy of Teuton or Slav — a struggle for supremacy in the Balkans ; and our idea had always been to avoid being drawn into a war over a Balkan question. If Germany became involved and France became involved, we had not made up our minds what we should do ; it was a case that we should have to consider. France would then have been drawn into a quarrel which was not hers, but in which, owing to her alliance, her honour and interest obliged her to engage. WE WERE FREE FROM ENGAGEMENTS, AND WE SHOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT BRITISH INTERESTS REQUIRED US TO DO. (87.)

The French Ambassador, according to Sir Edward Grey, "seemed quite prepared for this announcement and made no criticism upon it" (87).

This short sentence throws a vivid light upon one aspect of the situation which, at first sight, appears quite unexplainable to all who are not familiar with the underlying features of the situation.

Mr. Paul Cambon is well known in the chancelleries of Europe as a diplomat of the first order, keen, tactful, courageous and patriotic. Yet, to the last moment, he carefully avoids pressing the British Government. From the very first hour of the crisis, he clearly sees the point upon which diplomatic pressure should have been brought to bear. To the importance of reaching without delay that strategical spot he calls the Foreign Secretary's attention and even gently hints that his German proclivities should bear upon the action of Austria. But to push matters further he carefully abstains. For what reason? Why does he fail to repeat the quasi ultimatum worded by Mr. Sazonof, in the name of Russia, and Mr. Paléologue, in the name of France, and served upon Great Britain through the intermediary of the British Ambassador in Petersburg?

He evidently anticipates Sir Edward Grey's answer: "*He was quite prepared for it.*" As will be shown presently, to hurry on in advance of events and press the British Government for a decision would have been fatal to his object.

The despatch ends with a short *résumé* of Mr. Cambon's views on the situation in France and the probable action of the French Government:

He said French opinion was calm, but decided. He anticipated a demand from Germany that France would be neutral while Germany attacked Russia. This assurance France, of course, could not give ; she was bound to help Russia if Russia was attacked. (87.)

The contrast between the two attitudes — that of England towards France, and that of France in regard to Russia, — is significant. It marks the whole distance between an *Entente, cordial* but vague and

uncertain, and an *Alliance*, cordial or not, but clear and precise. In days of peril, these differences are quite appreciable.

The following day, July 30th, a new interview takes place (105). The decisive hour is coming: the French diplomat evidently knows it; he proceeds with consummate cleverness and prudence. His first move is to see that the text of the Letters exchanged between Sir Edward Grey and himself, in November 1912, be placed on record, both in the French and the English Chancelleries. These letters are made public of the first time. They constitute the *minute* of the agreement universally known to the world as the *Entente Cordiale*.

Under that agreement, no *obligation* was assumed or stipulated by either country to assist the other the moment it was attacked. It merely stipulated that "if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common". (Encl. I in No. 105). (\*)

Mr. Cambon thinks that the situation in Europe has reached the point which, under the terms of the agreement, calls for mutual consultation and prompt decision. "The peace of Europe was never more seriously threatened than it is now"; this is evident to everyone, to Sir Edward Grey himself. France is threatened with unprovoked aggression on the part of Germany. In support of this grave assertion, Mr. Cambon hands over to Sir Edward a Note from the French Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Viviani. In that note it is stated that German troops are concentrating on the frontier, that German patrols have twice penetrated on to France territory, that the "inhabitants of Alsace-Lorraine are prevented by the threat of being shot from crossing the frontier", that German reservists in France "have been called back to Germany by tens of thousands. This is the last stage before mobilisation, whereas we have not called out a single reservist."

Mr. Viviani concludes as follows:

"These facts, added to those contained in my telegram of yesterday, will enable you to prove to the British Government the pacific intentions of the one party and the aggressive intentions of the other." (Encl. III in 105.)

Having thus completed his record, Mr. Cambon carefully remarks that he does "not wish to ask [Sir Edward] to say directly that [Great Britain] would intervene" — he knows too well the man and the situation — but simply "to say what [the British Government] should do if certain circumstances arose", that is, if France was attacked by Germany.

At last, the vital question is put. Sir Edward Grey merely replies that the British Cabinet will meet the following morning, July 31st, and that he will see the French Ambassador in the afternoon (105).

The next day, the representative of France comes to receive the answer of the friendly nation. That answer is, that the British Government has decided. . . to take no engagement. — "I said that. . . we could not give any pledge at the present time" (119).

(\*) See Appendix I, page 27.

Up to the present moment, we did not feel, and public opinion did not feel, that any treaties or obligations of this country were involved. Further developments might alter this situation and cause the Government and Parliament to take the view that intervention was justified. The preservation of the neutrality of Belgium might be, I would not say a decisive, but an important factor, in determining our attitude. Whether we proposed to Parliament to intervene or not to intervene in a war, Parliament would wish to know how we stood with regard to the neutrality of Belgium, and it might be that I should ask both France and Germany whether each was prepared to undertake an engagement that she would not be the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium. (119)

This dubious declaration about Belgium's neutrality deserves to be noticed. We will take it up again when the attitude of the British Government towards Belgium and Luxemburg is considered.

Mr. Cambon brings the British Minister back to the crucial point. He repeats his question, whether Great Britain will help France if Germany makes an attack on her.

Sir Edward repeats that he can "only adhere to the answer that, as far as things had gone at present, *we could not take any engagement.*"

"As far as things had gone!" A state of war had been proclaimed in Alsace-Lorraine, 500,000 German soldiers had been massed on the frontiers of France, Luxemburg and Belgium; German patrols had already penetrated on to French territory. Of this, I was a personal witness: the very day Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Cambon were discussing the situation, I crossed the whole of Southern Alsace, from Basel to Strasbourg, through Colmar, in the midst of moving troops, artillery trains and the general confusion which accompanies the beginning of a huge war.

It looks as if, at this stage, patience nearly failed the representative of France. The cool reserve of the diplomat is shaken by the remembrance of the abandonment of France in 1870, following so closely the alliance of 1854 and the services rendered by France to Britain, in Crimea, and never reciprocated. He has recourse to the supreme argument: "It could not be to England's interest that France should be crushed by Germany. [Great Britain] should then be in a very diminished position with regard to Germany. In 1870 [Great Britain] had made a great mistake in allowing an enormous increase of German strength, and [she] should now be repeating the mistake" (\*).

This looks like criticism, and even bitter criticism. Mr. Cambon asks whether the Foreign Secretary "could not submit his question to the Cabinet again."

Sir Edward coldly replies "that the Cabinet would certainly be summoned as soon as there was some new development, but at the present moment, the only answer I could give was that *we could not undertake any definitive engagement*" (119).

It is not only to the French Ambassador that this dilatory answer of the British Government is given; it is also transmitted to the President of the Republic. On the 30th of July, Sir Francis Bertie is called to the Elysée by Mr. Poincaré, just returned in haste from his trip to Russia.

The relation of that interview is transmitted by the British Ambassador to the Foreign Secretary in Despatch 99. Mr. Poincaré —

(\*) This last sentence looks ambiguous. It evidently means either that "the British Government should not repeat the mistake", or "that it should now be repeating the mistake, if it did not intervene".

— is convinced that peace between the Powers is in the hands of Great Britain. If His Majesty's Government announced that England would come to the aid of France in the event of a conflict between France and Germany as a result of the present differences between Austria and Serbia, there would be no war, for Germany would at once modify her attitude.

I explained to him how difficult it would be for His Majesty's Government to make such an announcement, but he said that he must maintain that it would be in the interests of peace. France, he said, is pacific. She does not desire war, and all that she has done at present is to make preparations for mobilisation so as not to be taken unawares. The French Government will keep His Majesty's Government informed of everything that may be done in that way. They have reliable information that the German troops are concentrated round Thionville and Metz ready for war. If there were a general war on the Continent it would inevitably draw England into it for the protection of her vital interests. A declaration now of her intention to support France, whose desire it is that peace should be maintained, would almost certainly prevent Germany from going to war. (99)

As may be seen at once, Mr. Poincaré's opinion is identical with the views thrice expressed by Mr. Sazonof. It fully confirms the advice given by the Marquis of San Giuliano.

This important communication is immediately wired to London. Sir Edward Grey's reply is deferred to the next day. I give it in full:

No. 116.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie, British Ambassador at Paris.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, July 31, 1914.

I have received your telegram of yesterday's date.\*

Nobody here feels that in this dispute, so far as it has yet gone, British treaties or obligations are involved. Feeling is quite different from what it was during the Morocco question. That crisis involved a dispute directly involving France, whereas in this case France is being drawn into a dispute which is not hers.

I believe it to be quite untrue that our attitude has been a decisive factor in situation. German Government do not expect our neutrality.

**WE CANNOT UNDERTAKE A DEFINITIVE PLEDGE TO INTERVENE IN A WAR.** I have so told the French Ambassador, who has urged His Majesty's Government to reconsider this decision.

I have told him that we should not be justified in giving any pledge at the present moment, but that we will certainly consider the situation again directly there is a new development.

\*See No. 99.

It ought to be remembered that this despatch has been written and sent after the British Cabinet has met and considered the Viviani Note (Encl. III in 105) denouncing to the British Government the actual state of war in Germany. This is therefore, at the critical hour, the official reply of the British Government to the formal request of the President and Prime Minister of the French Republic for the intervention of Great Britain.

This despatch is in many respects the most important of the whole record. It is not the mere semi-confidential recital of a conversation between a Minister and an Ambassador; it is the official notification to the head of the French nation of the attitude of Great Britain; and that attitude is to refuse to pledge Great Britain to support France, even after German troops have invaded French territory. It is not only as an indication of policy that this document is highly significant; it is still more remarkable perhaps on account of the terms in which it is couched. To all who know the true significance of English words and the unimpeachable correctness of British diplomacy, it cannot but bring a shock to hear an assertion of fact by the President of the French Republic qualified as "*untrue*" by the British Foreign Secretary. That a perfect gentleman like Sir Edward Grey, so cool, so master of his

mind and language, should have gone to the point of giving such a denial in such terms to President Poincaré, must mean that his irritation at the insistence of the French Government was quite acute. The stiffness of the tone is accentuated by the contrast with the cordiality of his conversations with Prince Lichnowsky and the perfect urbanity of Sir Edward Goschen's language in Berlin, even after war is declared.

The second day after that despatch was sent, I was in Paris. Comments of all kinds were made in various circles upon the expectant and hesitating attitude of Great Britain. Had the terms of the despatch then been made public, I have not the slightest doubt that an explosion of anger would have burst out in Paris and throughout France, and that the *Entente Cordiale* would have been broken and shattered to the winds. The secular hatred against "perfidious Albion" would have been roused with such intensity that, at the risk of standing alone the aggression of Germany, the French people would have made all co-operation with Great Britain impossible.

"Happily", as was written later by a thoroughly informed contributor to the *Correspondant*, "the stroke of madness of Emperor William, in violating the neutrality of Luxemburg and Belgium has simplified all matters in striking England not only in her vital interests, but also in her honour". (\*)

In the evening of July 31st, Sir Edward Grey is informed by Sir Francis Bertie that the German Ambassador at Paris has officially notified the French Government that the general mobilisation of the German army, against Russia and France, has been ordered in Berlin (117).

On August 1st, mobilisation is general in Germany. At midnight, it starts in France. On Sunday the 2nd, Sir Edward Grey officially informs Mr. Cambon that the British Cabinet has decided to protect "French coasts or shipping" in the Channel and the North Sea against any possible attack from the German fleet.

"This assurance", the Minister adds, "is of course subject to the policy of His Majesty's Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding His Majesty's Government to take any action until the above contingency of action by the German fleet takes place" (118).

So that, two days after war was virtually begun, the British Government had not yet decided whether Great Britain would take a hand in the conflict, as an ally of France and Russia.

Let us see now where the British Cabinet stood with regard to Germany.

### Great Britain and Germany

It is not only upon the concrete question at issue between Austria and Servia, but also and above all upon the line of conduct to adopt

(\*) This article appeared in the *Correspondant* of the 25th of August 1914, under the title: "L'état d'esprit et la situation en Angleterre". Reliable information enables me to state that the writer is an ex-Foreign Minister in France.

Since these pages have been written, the British government has given publicity to the letters exchanged, on the 31st of July and the 1st of August, between President Poincaré and King George. They fully confirm my observations and accentuate the feeling of anxiety of the French Government as well as the hesitation of the British authorities. These letters will be found in Appendix I, page 28.

with regard to Germany, that the British Cabinet disagreed with the statesmen of France and Russia.

As early as the 27th of July, Sir George Buchanan told Mr. Sazonof that he "was mistaken if he believed that the cause of peace could be promoted by our telling the German Government that they would have to deal with us as well as with Russia and France" (44).

In that "mistake" Mr. Sazonof persisted to the end. President Poincaré, Premier Viviani, Mr. Paléologue, Count Benckendorff and the Marquis of San Giuliano 'erred' in the same manner. The Ambassador of France at Berlin, Mr. Jules Cambon, made the same "mistake". On the 31st of July, a despatch from that diplomat was communicated to the Foreign Office by Mr. Paul Cambon. Its contents are thus summarised by Sir Edward Grey in his despatch of the same day to Sir Francis Bertie:

M. Cambon referred to-day to a telegram that had been shown to Sir Arthur Nicolson this morning from the French Ambassador in Berlin, saying that it was the uncertainty with regard to whether we would intervene which was the encouraging element in Berlin, and that, if we would only declare definitely on the side of Russia and France, it would decide the German attitude in favour of peace. (119)

Who was right? The British statesmen, or the French, the Russians and the Italians? That these had a clearer view of the situation seems evident in the light of subsequent events. The prediction made by Mr. Sazonof on the 25th of July has been realised to the letter: "rivers of blood" are flowing, and England has "in the end" been "dragged into war".

At all events, it remains to the honour of Sir Edward Grey that, if he erred in his previsions and methods, the care of his country's interests remained the constant object of his preoccupations. To the pressure of France and Russia for intervention, he opposed invariably the "interests" of Great Britain. This we have already seen. In his relations with Germany he took the same ground and kept it to the last.

On the 27th of July, the Foreign Secretary is informed by the German Ambassador that the proposed mediation of the four Powers with a view to bringing an understanding between Austria and Russia is accepted in principle by the German Government. Prince Lichnowsky further asks Sir Edward Grey to use his influence in Petersburg in order to circumscribe the cause of conflict. Sir Edward replies by advising Germany to exercise a moderating action in Vienna. This is precisely what Mr. Cambon had advised on the 24th, before "it would be too late", that is, before "the Austrians had attacked Serbia" (10). To Prince Lichnowsky, Sir Edward Grey gives the assurance that "as long as Germany would work to keep the peace, [he] would keep closely in touch" (46).

The same day, the Foreign Secretary is informed by Sir Edward Goschen that the German Government objects to the "method of procedure" suggested by the British Government (43).

To this, Sir Edward replies, on the 28th, inviting the German Foreign Secretary to suggest the form of mediation (68).

On that day, Sir Edward Goschen meets Chancellor Von Bethman-Hollweg. The German statesman is "most anxious that Germany

should work together with England for maintenance of general peace, as they had done successfully in the last European crisis." The *form* of mediation proposed by England he cannot accept, but he assures that he is "doing his very best both at Vienna and St. Petersburg to get the two governments to discuss the situation directly with each other and in a friendly way." But the situation is much complicated by the mobilisation of the Russian army. He says that "if war were to result, Russia would be entirely responsible" (71).

The next day, July 29th, two other despatches come from Sir Edward Goschen (75-76). Tension is growing. Secretary Von Jagow is "very depressed". His counsels of moderation have been ill-received in Vienna, on account of mobilisation in Russia (76). Compared with the Russian Note of the 27th of July (53), in which a similar advice from the French Government is rejected, this is ominously significant.

Both instances seem to justify Mr. Cambon's warning: counsels of moderation have come too late.

Nevertheless, the German Chancellor assures the British Secretary that he is "doing his best to support [Sir Edward Grey's] efforts in the cause of general peace" (75).

Sir Edward immediately sends to the Chancellor the cordial expression of his gratitude (77).

On the same day, the British Minister is informed by Prince Lichnowsky that the German Government is negotiating with Vienna and Petersburg. Sir Edward agrees that a direct understanding between Austria and Russia would be the best possible solution. He therefore agrees to "press no proposal as long as there is a prospect of that"; but he stands ready to take up the project again the moment Germany is prepared to agree to it. Italy and France accept the idea. "In fact, mediation was ready to come into operation by any method that Germany thought possible if only Germany would "*press the button*" in the interest of peace" (84).

On that same day again, Chancellor Von Bethman-Hollweg, after a visit to Potsdam, makes his famous bid for England's neutrality in case of war. In return for that neutrality, he offers to the British Ambassador to pledge his Government to respect absolutely the neutrality of Holland during the war, and the integrity of Belgian and French territory after the war; but as to the possessions of France, he makes no promise.

"In reply to His Excellency's enquiry how I thought his request would appeal to you," writes Sir Edward Goschen, "I said that I did not think it probable that at this stage of events you would care to bind yourself to any course of action and that I was of opinion that you would desire to retain full liberty". (85)

It is generally held that the determination of the British Government to share in the war was prompted by this "infamous" proposal of the German Chancellor. Nothing is more inaccurate. Friendly conversations and negotiations went on between the two governments during the three days following the receipt of that despatch at the Foreign Office.

Just before it reaches London, Sir Edward Grey meets the German Ambassador and renews his proposal of a joint mediation of Germany.

Great Britain, France and Italy. He goes so far as to accept the idea of a temporary occupation of Belgrade and a portion of Servian territory by the Austrians (88). After the exchange of official views and advice, the conversation takes a more intimate turn. For the first time, Sir Edward speaks of the possibility of Great Britain taking part in the war. This important despatch deserves to be quoted in full:

No. 89.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, British Ambassador at Berlin.

Sir,

Foreign Office, July 29, 1914.

After speaking to the German Ambassador this afternoon about the European situation, I said that I wished to say to him, in a quite private and friendly way, something that was on my mind. The situation was very grave. While it was restricted to the issues at present actually involved we had no thought of interfering in it. But if Germany became involved in it, and then France, the issue might be so great that it would involve all European interests; and I did not wish him to be misled by the friendly tone of our conversation which I hoped would continue into thinking that we should stand aside.

He said that he quite understood this, but he asked whether I meant that we should, under certain circumstances, intervene?

I replied that I did not wish to say that, or to use anything that was like a threat or an attempt to apply pressure by saying that, if things became worse, we should intervene. There would be no question of our intervening if Germany was not involved, or even if France was not involved. But we knew very well, that if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, we must intervene at once, and the decision would have to be very rapid, just as the decisions of other Powers had to be. I hoped that the friendly tone of our conversations would continue as at present, and that I should be able to keep as closely in touch with the German Government in working for peace. But if we failed in our efforts to keep the peace, and if the issue spread so that it involved practically every European interest, I did not wish to be open to any reproach from him that the friendly tone of all our conversations had misled him or his Government into supposing that we should not take action, and to the reproach, that, if they had not been so misled, the course of things might have been different.

The German Ambassador took no exception to what I had said; indeed, he told me that it accorded with what he had already given in Berlin as his view of the situation.

I am, &c.,

E. GREY.

So, to both parties,—to those who request the active support of England and to those who are bent on seeking her neutrality, — the British statesman has but one invariable answer to give: I promise nothing, I pledge myself neither to war nor to peace: the sole interest of Great Britain shall dictate my conduct.

So far, I have abstained from expressing any opinion upon the rôle and action of the men whose words and declarations I have cited or analysed; but here, at the risk of scandalising once more the false patriots, so numerous in Canada, I cannot refrain from expressing all my admiration for the courageous and unswerving patriotism of the statesman whose sole and constant inspiration is *the interest of his country*.

On July 30th, the British Minister is informed by Sir Edward Goschen that Secretary of State Von Jagow has communicated to Vienna the English proposal of a mediation of the four Powers, including leave to Austria to occupy Belgrade; but the success of that intervention is rendered doubtful by the mobilisation of the Russian army (98).

The same day, Sir Edward Grey forwards the reply of the British Government to the proposals of the German Chancellor. I give it in full:



Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, British Ambassador at Berlin.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, July 30, 1914.

YOUR telegram of 29th July.\*

His Majesty's Government cannot for a moment entertain the Chancellor's proposal that they should bind themselves to neutrality on such terms.

What he asks us in effect is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies.

From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power, and become subordinate to German policy.

Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover.

The Chancellor also in effect asks us to bargain away whatever obligation or interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either.

Having said so much it is unnecessary to examine whether the prospect of a future general neutrality agreement between England and Germany offered positive advantages sufficient to compensate us for tying our hands now. We must preserve our full freedom to act as circumstances may seem to us to require in any such unfavourable and regrettable development of the present crisis as the Chancellor contemplates.

You should speak to the Chancellor in the above sense, and add most earnestly that the one way of maintaining the good relations between England and Germany is that they should continue to work together to preserve the peace of Europe; if we succeed in this object, the mutual relations of Germany and England will, I believe, be *ipso facto* improved and strengthened. For that object His Majesty's Government will work in that way with all sincerity and goodwill.

And I will say this: If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis, and, Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite rapprochement between the Powers than has been possible hitherto.

\* See No. 85.

Of that document, now historical, both the spirit and the tone deserve full admiration. In its noble simplicity, it is the true language of a statesman speaking in the name of a great nation. But in the tragedy of the situation, one of the essentials of that document, characteristic as it of the marvelous self-control of Sir Edward Grey, has escaped the attention of most people, British or foreign. Not one single word of that despatch intimates that Great Britain or her Government will take any action. To negotiate or "bargain" for the security of France and Belgium they refuse peremptorily; but that they are prepared to stand actively by France and Belgium they do not even insinuate in the most distant manner.

The next day, July 31st, negotiations are still going on between London and Berlin to determine an intervention between Russia and Austria. Sir Edward Grey goes further, he meets again Prince Lichnowsky and makes a supreme bid for peace. His proposition is thus summarised in his despatch of that day (111) to Sir Edward Goschen:

I said to German Ambassador this morning that if Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace, and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris, and go the length of saying that if Russia and France would not accept it His Majesty's Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences; but otherwise, I told German Ambassador that if France became involved we should be drawn in.

You can add this when sounding Chancellor or Secretary of State as to proposal above. (111.)

It is worth while noticing that this extraordinary proposition was made twenty-four hours after the British Government had rejected so emphatically Germany's "infamous" proposition, and the very day Sir Edward Grey, after a Cabinet meeting, summarily replied to President Poincaré that he could not give "any pledge" to France, and declared twice to Mr. Cambon that he could not take "any engagement", even if France was attacked by Germany.

It is therefore on record that, on the 31st of July, the British Government has refused to take any engagement towards France and Russia and has made to Germany a conditional offer of neutrality. This conditional offer is seemingly made without the knowledge of the French and Russian Ambassadors. In a subsequent conversation, Sir Edward Grey repeats to Mr. Cambon the latter part of his conversation with the German Ambassador: "If France became involved we should be drawn in." But it does not appear that he made the French diplomat cognisant of his former proposal, which, if accepted by Germany and rejected by France and Russia, would have resulted in Great Britain remaining neutral in case of an aggression upon France, in case even of the invasion of Belgium by the German army.

On the same day, the Foreign Office is twice informed from Berlin that the chances of peace are diminishing from hour to hour. No reply from Vienna has come to the latest message from the German Chancellor. Mobilisation in Russia is going on (121-122).

On August 1st, Prince Lichnowsky inquires whether Great Britain would remain neutral "if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgium neutrality". "He even suggested that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed." Sir Edward Grey replies that he feels "obliged to refuse definitely any promise to remain neutral on similar terms, and [he] could only say that [the British Government] must keep [their] hands free" (123).

This closes the friendly conversations between England and Germany.

The violation of Belgium's neutrality having been the official motive of the declaration of war by Great Britain, it is but proper to consider now what was, previous to the war, the attitude of the Foreign Office upon that aspect of the situation.

### The Neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg

The international status of Belgium was first determined by the treaty concluded in London, on the 15th of November 1831, between Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, Russia and Belgium herself. It marked the triumph of the Revolution of 1830, which freed Belgium from the yoke of Holland, and its official recognition by the Great Powers.

Under Article VII of that convention, it was stipulated that—"Belgium . . . shall form an independent and perpetually neutral state. It shall be bound to observe such neutrality towards all other states."

Under Article XXV, it is agreed that — "the Courts of Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia, guarantee to His Majesty the King of the Belgians the execution of all the preceding Articles."

On the 19th of April 1839, the same Powers imposed upon Holland the definitive recognition of Belgium's independence.

A new treaty was signed at London, the two first articles of which read as follows:

ART. I. — Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and Bohemia, His Majesty the King of the French, His Majesty the King of Prussia, and His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, declare, that the Articles hereunto annexed, and forming the tenour of the Treaty concluded this day between His Majesty the King of the Belgians and His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, are considered as having the same force and validity as if they were textually inserted in the present Act, and that they are thus placed under the guarantee of Their said Majesties.

ART. II — The Treaty of the 15th of November, 1831, between Their Majesties the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and Bohemia, the King of the French, the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of all the Russias, and His Majesty the King of the Belgians, is declared not to be obligatory upon the High Contracting Parties.

This does not mean that the guarantee of 1831 has ceased to exist. The only new feature is the acknowledgment by Holland of Belgium's independence. The obligations of the Great Powers towards Belgium remain unchanged. In the "Articles annexed", Article VII and Article XXV are identical with those of the Treaty of 1831 quoted above.

The situation of Luxemburg in the hierarchy of nations is identical. An appanage of the House of Nassau, which was reinstated on the throne of Holland after Napoleon's downfall, the Grand Duchy was made a part of the Germanic Confederacy, which lasted till the victory of Prussia over Austria at Sadowa. The Grand Duchy was then claimed by the King of the Belgians, who wanted to annex it to his own province of Luxemburg. The Great Powers decided otherwise. On the 11th of May 1867, a Convention was signed in London by the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, Prussia and Russia. Under the terms of that Treaty, it was settled, with the consent of both Holland and Belgium, that the Grand Duchy would remain under the sovereignty of the King of Holland; but it was stipulated that the little State, so often the field of bloody battles and the object of fierce disputes between nations, would become for ever neutral, under the guarantee of the Great Powers. The main article of that Treaty reads as follows:

ART. II — The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, within the limits determined by the Act annexed to the Treaties of the 19th of April 1839, under the guarantee of the Courts of Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia, shall henceforth form a perpetually neutral State.

It shall be bound to observe the same neutrality towards all other States.

The High Contracting Parties engage to respect the principle of neutrality stipulated by the present Article.

That principle is and remains placed under the sanction of the collective guarantee of the Powers signing parties to the present Treaty, with the exception of Belgium, which is itself a neutral State.

The fortifications of the Capital — one of the strongest places in Europe — were rased, and the small army of the Grand Duke reduced to a few scores of policemen. The honour of Kings and the might of the Great Powers were looked upon by the poor Luxemburgers as a sufficient guarantee of their independence.

The obligations of the Great Powers to these two minor States are rigorously identical. If there is any difference, the stipulations in favour of Luxemburg are perhaps still more clearly defined than those in favour of Belgium.

For the sake of accuracy, it is proper to note that Austria, who signed the Treaties relating to Belgium, was not a party to the Convention of 1867, which was practically made against her. Italy, who did not yet exist as a nation in 1831, and Holland, who had been defeated by Belgium, are bound only to protect the neutrality of the Grand Duchy and not that of Belgium. Great Britain, as well as Prussia, France and Russia, has the same obligations towards the two States.

How, in the course of the negotiations which preceded the war, did the British Government consider those obligations?

The case of Luxemburg is mentioned but once, quite casually, in the numerous interviews which Sir Edward Grey has with Mr. Cambon. This is on the 2nd of August. The French Ambassador asks what the British Government thinks of the violation of Luxemburg by the Germans. Sir Edward Grey gives no direct answer; he merely refers Mr. Cambon to the views expressed in 1867 by Lord Derby and Lord Clarendon (148). (\*)

The cry of distress of the poor little nation reaches London the same day. The State Minister, Mr. Eyshen, wires to inform the Powers that the German troops have invaded the territory of the Grand Duchy. To the German Minister at Luxemburg he has served "an energetic protest against this aggression"; to the Great Powers he now appeals for a fulfilment of the guarantee so solemnly given in 1867 (147).

Then, complete silence. The German flood has passed. Once more, might has overcome right; and the Great Powers, who had created the right and pledged themselves to stand by it, remain silent.

The rumour went abroad that, when the invaders came, the Grand Duchess went alone to meet the German hordes. To their leader she boldly said that unless he promised to respect the life and property of her subjects, he would have to pass over her body before he could reach her Capital. Like Attila and the Huns in face of the shepherdess of Nanterre, the new barbarians felt ashamed. They occupied the town and the Duchy, but they spared the inhabitants, their homes and their property.

The heroism of that young woman, scarcely past the age of childhood, does more honour to mankind than all the calculations of the diplomats and the conquests of soldiers. Yet, the world has paid no attention to it.

In the case of Belgium, the situation was more complicated. It was not a mere question of moral right, so insignificant in the eyes of rulers, diplomats and captains.

For Great Britain, the port of Antwerp remains what it was in Napoleon's time: "the pistol turned against England's heart". In the Treaty of 1831, under Article XV, it was stipulated, at the special request of the British Government, that "the port of Antwerp, in conformity with the stipulations of the XVIIth Article of the Treaty of Paris, of the 30th of May 1814, shall continue to be solely a port of commerce."

Great Britain had therefore a much greater interest in the neutrality of Belgium than in the safety of Luxemburg. This Sir Edward

(\*) See Appendix II, page 30.

Grey made no attempt to conceal. When Mr Cambon, after having inquired about Luxemburg, asked him what he "should say about the violation of the neutrality of Belgium", he replied at once "THAT WAS A MUCH MORE IMPORTANT MATTER".

For the Powers of the continent, the Valley of the Maas has been at all times, from the days of Caesar to those of Napoleon, the pathway and the battlefield of the armies of Europe.

In all the War Offices of Europe, it was taken for granted that, in the event of a conflict between France and Germany, the army that would first seize the Maas pass and the forts of Liège and Namur would have a marked advantage over the other. With the exception of the fortifications of Antwerp, all the military works of the Belgians were executed around that strategical point.

When the German statesmen — true disciples of the Iron Chancellor who proclaimed, amidst the servile applause of all Europe, Britain included, that "might precedes right", — announced to the British Ambassador in Berlin, on the 29th of July, that they could not promise to respect Belgium's neutrality, it does not appear that Sir Edward Goschen felt the slightest surprise or indignation (85).

When the German Government, to obtain Great Britain's neutrality, offered to pledge themselves to re-establish Belgium in all her rights, once the war over, Sir Edward Grey gave the noble answer quoted above and now known the world over (101). But as already observed, while the British Government refused "*to bargain away*" the rights of Belgium, they did not promise to stand in defence of those rights.

This answer was given on July 30th.

The next day, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Cambon talked the matter over. What were then, in Sir Edward's own words, the views and intentions of the British Government?

The preservation of the neutrality of Belgium might be, I would not say a decisive, but an important factor, in determining our attitude. Whether we proposed to Parliament to intervene or not to intervene in a war, Parliament would wish to know how we stood with regard to the neutrality of Belgium, and it might be that I should ask both France and Germany whether each was prepared to undertake an engagement that she would not be the first to violate the neutrality of Belgium (119).

So that, twenty-four hours after the British Government had so haughtily rejected the "infamous" proposals of Germany — since proclaimed before the whole world as the sole true cause of the intervention of Great Britain in the war — the British Cabinet and the Foreign Secretary did not yet consider that the violation of Belgium's neutrality was a "decisive factor in determining" their attitude.

On the same day, July 31st, Sir Edward Grey officially inquires in Paris and Berlin, whether the French and the German Governments are "prepared to engage to respect neutrality of Belgium so long as no other Power violates it" (114).

This *démarche* is immediately communicated to the Belgian Government. To this communication, made through Sir Francis Villiers, British Minister at Brussels, Sir Edward Grey adds:

"You should say that I assume that the Belgian Government will maintain to the utmost of their power their neutrality, which I desire and expect other Powers to uphold and observe," (115).

The first reply comes from Berlin. It is dilatory. The German

Chancellor would like to know what France is prepared to do (122). The same day, the reply comes from Paris that the "French Government are resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other Power violating that neutrality, that France might find herself under the necessity, in order to assure defence of her own security, to act otherwise" (125).

Belgium replies that she "expects and desires that other Powers will observe and uphold her neutrality, which she intends to maintain to the utmost of her power" (128).

On August 1st, Sir Edward Grey meets the German Ambassador. A summary of their interview is given in despatch 123 to Sir Edward Goschen at Berlin:

No. 123.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, British Ambassador at Berlin.

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 1, 1914.

I told the German Ambassador to-day that the reply (\*) of the German Government with regard to the neutrality of Belgium was a matter of very great regret, because the neutrality of Belgium affected feeling in this country. If Germany could see her way to give the same assurance as that which had been given by France it would materially contribute to relieve anxiety and tension here. On the other hand, if there were a violation of the neutrality of Belgium by one combatant while the other respected it, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling in this country. I said that we had been discussing this question at a Cabinet meeting, and as I was authorised to tell him this I gave him a memorandum of it.

HE ASKED ME WHETHER, IF GERMANY GAVE A PROMISE NOT TO VIOLATE BELGIUM NEUTRALITY WE WOULD ENGAGE TO REMAIN NEUTRAL.

I REPLIED THAT I COULD NOT SAY THAT; our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude should be. All I could say was that our attitude would be determined largely by public opinion here, and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here. I DID NOT THINK THAT WE COULD GIVE A PROMISE OF NEUTRALITY ON THAT CONDITION ALONE.

The Ambassador pressed me as to whether I could not formulate conditions on which we would remain neutral. He even suggested that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed.

I said that I felt obliged to REFUSE DEFINITELY ANY PROMISE TO REMAIN NEUTRAL ON SIMILAR TERMS, and I could only say that we must keep our hands free.

I am, &c.,  
E. GREY.

See No. 122

As may be noticed, Sir Edward twice mentions the influence of public opinion on the attitude of the British Government. It is one of the characteristics of British policy.

From these despatches and conversations, no other conclusion can be drawn than this: On the first of August, three days after the "infamous" proposals of Germany, the British Government had not yet decided whether they would go to war, in support of France or Belgium, or to remain at peace, even if they were given the assurance that Belgium's neutrality would be respected and that France would lose no territory either in Europe or in other parts of the world.

What was then the determining motive, the "decisive factor", which brought Great Britain into the conflict?

### The Freedom of British Trade

From the 1st of August, events rush on with the quickness of lightning. The discreet talk of the Chancelleries is hushed by the clash of arms.

Luxemburg is invaded on the 2nd of August, Belgium the next day.

On the 3rd, the French Government offers to Belgium the help of five Army Corps. The offer is declined (151). This has been too easily forgotten when comments were made upon the 'abandonment' of Belgium by France in the hour of danger.

The next day, August 4th, the King of the Belgians calls for the help of Great Britain. Contrary to what has happened to Luxemburg, this appeal is heard. The British ultimatum is served upon the German Government (153). At midnight, war is declared.

Between the first and the 4th of August, a few trivial incidents are recorded; but in the conflict of great international interests, no attention has been paid to them. They had nevertheless a decisive influence upon the determination of the British Government.

On the 1st of August, the Foreign Office is advised that some British merchant-ships are "forcibly detained" at Hamburg. Sir Edward Grey wires at once to Sir Edward Goschen:

You should request German Government to send immediate orders that they should be allowed to proceed without delay. The effect on public opinion here will be deplorable unless this is done. His Majesty's Government, on their side, are most anxious to avoid any incident of an aggressive nature, and the German Government will, I hope, be equally careful not to take any step which would make the situation between us impossible. (130)

The Secretary of State Von Jagow gives immediate orders to release the British ships. This, he says, "must be regarded as a special favour to His Majesty's Government, as no other foreign ships have been allowed to leave" (145). The next day, Sir Edward Grey protests against the seizure of cargoes of sugar at Hamburg. The tone becomes harsher: "I most earnestly trust that the orders already sent to Hamburg to allow the clearance of British ships covers also the release of their cargoes, the detention of which cannot be justified" (149).

Two days after, he sends the following despatch:

No. 156.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, British Ambassador at Berlin.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, August 4, 1914.

I continue to receive numerous complaints from British firms as to the detention of their ships at Hamburg, Cuxhaven, and other German ports. This action on the part of the German authorities is totally unjustifiable. It is in direct contravention of international law and of the assurance given to your Excellency by the Imperial Chancellor. You should demand the immediate release of all British ships if such release has not yet been given.

For anyone who knows the difference between "*request*" and "*demand*" it is easy to judge of the growing feeling in England during that short interval of three days.

In the days of Napoleon III and the unfortunate expedition to Mexico, the confusion of those two words brought France and the United States to the verge of war. Some explanations had been *requested* (*demandées*) by the French Embassy at Washington. Some secretary or clerk translated "*demande*" by "demand". The anger of the Americans was such that the original text of the despatch from Paris had to be produced and the dictionary to be consulted in order to appease the storm.

Here it is no mere error of vocabulary. The moment has come

when, according to the words of Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Cambon and Prince Lichnowsky, "British interests" demand prompt and energetic action.

The freedom of British trade is at jeopardy. The majesty of the British flag is insulted. The Mistress of the Seas is attacked in her supremacy. No further hesitations, no more friendly talk, no procrastination. The tradition of Elisabeth and Cromwell revives, the shades of Drake and Nelson appear on the horizon. Farewell to peace, welcome war!

But Sir Edward Grey has not forgotten what he told Prince Lichnowsky on the 1st of August. He takes hold of the weapon which the appeal from Belgium has placed in his hands, and with it he deals a straight blow at the enemy. His main object, peace, he is forced to renounce. For the defence of British interests he has to accept war: he therefor places himself on the most favourable ground to appeal to public opinion, to inflame British feelings and to unite the various factions of the British people.

The defense of Belgium's neutrality may have been the official and popular motive of Great Britain's intervention in the war. But the true and "decisive factor" was the determination to keep the supremacy of the seas and to attack the only war fleet capable of threatening that domination.

\* \* \*

This closes the analysis of that historical period, so short but so full of events, the repercussion of which will likely upset the balance of power in Europe, and possibly change the pivot of the world's political forces.

All those who have read the whole of these pages, without passion, in the true spirit which has inspired them, will readily grant that they contain the elements of one of the most glorious and illuminating chapters of Britain's history. The statesman who played the main part, as far as British interests were concerned, may have been mistaken in his diagnosis of the situation. But in certain respects he appears loftier than ever. During the Balkan war, he succeeded in preventing the conflagration from covering the whole of Europe. This time, the trend of events and the rivalry of nations were irresistible, but the trace of his efforts is none the less deep and remarkable. In both cases, faithful to the highest British traditions, he was, before and above all, the man of *his* country. Such is the lesson which ought to be drawn from the reading of that chapter.

Canada could not better demonstrate her loyalty to British traditions than by imitating the example of the great nation from which she derived her political institutions.



## APPENDICES

1

### The “*Entente Cordiale*”

(Text of the Letters placed on record by Mr. Paul Cambon, French Ambassador at London, in his interview with Sir Edward Grey, July 30th, 1914.)

Enclosure 1 in No. 105.

*Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Cambon, French Ambassador in London.*

My Dear Ambassador, *Foreign Office, November 22, 1912.*

From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be regarded as, an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other.

I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the General Staffs would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them.

Yours, &c.,  
E. GREY.

Enclosure 2 in No. 105.

*M. Cambon, French Ambassador in London, to Sir Edward Grey.*

(Translation)

*French Embassy, London, November 23, 1912.*

Dear Sir Edward,

You reminded me in your letter of yesterday, 22nd November, that during the last few years the military and naval authorities of France and Great Britain had consulted with each other from time to time that it had always been understood that these consultations should not

restrict the liberty of either Government to decide in the future whether they should lend each other the support of their armed forces; that, on either side, these consultations between experts were not and should not be considered as engagements binding our Governments to take action in certain eventualities; that, however, I had remarked to you that, if one or other of the two Governments had grave reasons to fear an unprovoked attack on the part of a third Power, it would become essential to know whether it could count on the armed support of the other.

Your letter answers that point, and I am authorised to state that, in the event of one of our two Governments having grave reasons to fear either an attack from a third Power, or some event threatening the general peace, that Government would immediately examine with the other the question whether both Governments should act together in order to prevent aggression or preserve peace. If so, the two Governments would deliberate as to the measures which they would be prepared to take in common ; if those measures involved action, the two Governments would take into immediate consideration the plans of their general staffs and would then decide as to the effect to be given to those plans.

Yours, &c.,  
PAUL CAMBON.

Text of the letters exchanged between President Poincaré and King George V previous to the war :

### Letter from M. Poincaré

Paris, July 31, 1914.

Dear and Great Friend :

In the grave events through which Europe is passing I feel bound to convey to Your Majesty information which the Government of the Republic have received from Germany. The military preparations which are being undertaken by the Imperial Government, especially in the immediate neighbourhood of the French frontier, are being pushed forward every day with fresh vigour and speed.

France, resolved to continue to the very end to do all that lies within her power to maintain peace, has up to the present confined herself solely to the most indispensable precautionary measures, but if it does not appear that her prudence and moderation serve to check Germany's action, indeed, quite the reverse, we are perhaps, then, in spite of the moderation of the government of the Republic and the calm public opinion, on the eve of most terrible events.

From all the information which reaches us it would seem that war would be inevitable were Germany convinced that the British Government would not intervene in a conflict in which France might be engaged. If, on the other hand, Germany were convinced the Entente Cordials would be affirmed in case of need, even to the extent of taking the field side by side, there would be the greatest chance that peace would remain unbroken.

It is true that our military and naval arrangements leave complete liberty to Your Majesty's Government, and that in the letters exchanged in 1912 between Sir Edward Grey and M. Paul Cambon (the French Ambassador in London), Great Britain and France entered into nothing more than a mutual agreement to consult one another in the event of European tension and to examine in concert whether a common action were advisable. But the character of the close friendship which public feeling has given in both countries to the Entente between Great Britain and France, the confidence with which our governments have never ceased to work for the maintenance of peace, and the signs of sympathy which Your Majesty has ever shown to France, justify me in informing you quite frankly of my impressions, which are those of the Government of the Republic and of all France.

It is, I consider, in the language and action of the British Government, that henceforward the last chance of a peaceful ending will depend.

We ourselves, from the initial stages of the crisis, have enjoined upon our ally an attitude of moderation, from which they have not swerved. In concert with Your Majesty's Government and in conformity with Sir Edward Grey's latest suggestions, we will continue to act on the same lines, but if all efforts at a conciliation emanated from one side, and if Germany and Austria can speculate on the abstention of Great Britain, Austria's demands will remain inflexible, and an agreement between her and Russia will become impossible.

I am profoundly convinced that at the present moment the more Great Britain, France and Russia can give a deep impression that they are united in their diplomatic action, the more possible will it be to count upon the preservation of peace.

I beg that your Majesty will excuse a step which is only inspired by the hope of seeing the European balance of power definitely reaffirmed.

Pray accept the expression of my cordial sentiments.

R. POINCARE.

### The King's Reply.

Buckingham Palace, August 1, 1914.

Dear and Great Friend,—I most highly appreciate the sentiment which moved you to write to me in so cordial and friendly a spirit, and I am grateful to you for having stated your views so fully and frankly.

You may be assured that the present situation in Europe has been the cause of much anxiety and preoccupation to me, and I am glad to think that our two governments have worked so amicably together in endeavouring to find a peaceful solution of the questions at issue.

It would be a source of real satisfaction to me if our united efforts were to meet with success, and I am still not without hope that the terrible events which seem so near may be averted.

I admire the restraint which you and your government are exercising in refraining from taking undue military measures on the frontier and in adopting an attitude which could not in anywise be interpreted as a provocative one.

I am personally using my best endeavours with the Emperors of Russia and Germany toward finding some solution by which actual military operations may at any rate be postponed, and time thus be given for calm discussion between the powers. I intend to prosecute these efforts without intermission so long as any hope remains of an amicable settlement.

As to my country, events are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to forecast future developments, but you may be assured that my government will continue to discuss freely and frankly any point which might arise of interest to our two nations with M. Cambon.

Believe me, Monsieur le Président,

GEORGE, R.I.

## II

# The Neutrality of Luxemburg

To well understand the marked difference between the policies pursued by the British Government towards Luxemburg and Belgium, one has to refresh one's memory with a short review of the circumstances which preceded the signing of the Convention of 1867.

The international status of Luxemburg was very peculiar.

At the Congress of Vienna, the feudal title of the House of Nassau as sovereign of the Grand Duchy was solemnly acknowledged; at the same time, the little state was included in the Germanic Confederacy. The Princes of Nassau being also reinstated on the throne of Holland, the Grand Duchy was civilly administered in their name by a Minister appointed by the Dutch Government. But Prussia, under the pretence that Holland was unable to protect Luxemburg against foreign attacks, had succeeded in obtaining from the Congress the right to occupy its territory for military purposes. The town of Luxemburg was made one of the strongest places in Europe.

The crushing defeat of Austria at Sadowa brought in its wake the disruption of the German Confederacy. Napoleon III at last realised the danger resulting from the sudden growth of the power of Prussia. He represented to the King of Holland that the *raison d'être* of the military occupation of the Grand Duchy by the Prussians had ceased. He offered to annex Luxemburg to France, with the consent of the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy — as was done in Savoy — and to pay a handsome indemnity to Holland. Prussia showed her teeth. War was nearly declared. It was stopped by the intervention of the other Powers, Great Britain being particularly active in the matter. A Congress was convened in London, and, after a few days of deliberation, a treaty was signed on the 11th of May 1867.

As mentioned in the preceding pages, Belgium had offered to annex the Grand Duchy. That proposal was rejected by the Powers.

Under the Treaty, the suzerainty of the King of Holland over Luxemburg was acknowledged once more. The Grand Duchy was declared to be perpetually a neutral state "under the guarantee of the

*Courts of Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia and Russia*". It was further stipulated that—

"That principle is and remains placed under the sanction of the collective guarantee of the Powers signing parties to the present Treaty, with the exception of Belgium, which is itself a neutral State."

Under Article III of the Convention, the Grand Duchy was virtually disarmed:

#### ARTICLE III.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg being neutralised, according to the terms of the preceding Article, the maintenance or establishment of fortresses upon its territory becomes without necessity as well as without object.

In consequence, it is agreed by common consent that the city of Luxembourg, considered in time past, in a military point of view, as a Federal fortress, shall cease to be a fortified city.

His Majesty the King Grand Duke reserves to himself to maintain in that city the number of troops necessary to provide in it for the maintenance of good order.

It may be mentioned in passing that, at the death of King William III, in 1890, the personal title of suzerainty of the Kings of Holland over the Grand Duchy ceased, under the operation of the Salic Law, which prevails in Luxemburg. King William having left no male heir, his relative, Prince Adolphe de Nassau, father of the present Grand Duchess, became the sovereign *de facto* and *de jure* of the little state.

The circumstances which surrounded the conclusion of the Treaty of 1867 gave rise to several interesting debates in both Houses of the British Parliament. It was under the third Derby administration. Lord Stanley was Foreign Secretary. It does not appear that Disraeli, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, took any leading part in the matter.

As early as the 5th of April 1867, Sir ROBERT PEEL strongly protests against the purchase of Luxemburg by France — following so closely the annexation of Savoy and Nice, — because "*the holding of Luxemburg is a matter of first importance for France, for defensive or offensive operations against Germany*". (\*)

Lord STANLEY does not conceal that the British Government is annoyed at the attempts of France to check the expansion of Prussia. He admits that Prussia has asked the British Government, first, "to endeavour to dissuade Holland" from ceding the Grand Duchy to France; second, to state "what construction" His Majesty's Government put "upon the guarantee contained in the Treaty of 1839". To the second question, the Foreign Secretary has as yet given no definite reply. The representation ought to be made collectively by all the parties to the Treaty. That the guarantee is "one of a character to apply to the present case" is doubtful. The signing Powers have promised to "defend" the peaceful possession of Luxemburg by the King of Holland; but to prevent a free cession of the Grand Duchy is another question. If the King of Holland willingly ceded his rights to France, with the consent of the inhabitants of Luxemburg, and the tacit or indirect acquiescence of Prussia, it would not be the "duty of the British Government to interpose". This is, however, but a "provisional" answer to the first question of the Prussian Government.

Lord Stanley takes advantage of the discussion to express his strong sympathies for Prussia. He goes further than Sir Robert Peel:

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVI — Page 1252.

"THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY HAVE SEEN WITH ENTIRE ACQUIESCENCE, AND EVEN, I BELIEVE, WITH APPROVAL, THE ENORMOUS AGGRANDISEMENT WHICH HAS ACCRUED TO GERMANY, OR RATHER TO PRUSSIA".

The days of the "*Entente Cordiale*" were yet far distant. The 'German menace' did not seem to trouble much the statesmen of Great Britain. Their horror of German militarism and barbarism was not conspicuous. True, Prussia had not yet started her naval program.

But the deep inspiration of British policy was then what it is now.

In spite of his pro-German sympathies, Lord Stanley plainly informed the Prussian Government and all the Powers that, in the matter of Luxemburg, "*no interest of ours was either directly or indirectly involved, and we stood absolutely free and unfettered.*" The security of Belgium is an "*entirely different matter.*" (\*)

This reads very much like a first edition of Sir Edward Grey's answers to President Poincaré, Mr. Cambon and Prince Lichnowsky.

On the 29th of April, Lord STANLEY makes the announcement that a Conference of the disinterested Powers is likely to meet and settle the question, with the consent of France and Prussia. "If hostilities were to break out, the position of England in this quarrel would be one of strict and impartial neutrality". (\*\*) This attitude of neutrality has been adopted by the British Government, in spite of the fact that, according to Lord Stanley himself, "since the Treaty of 1839, Luxemburg has been under a European guarantee *to which England is one of the parties*". (\*\*\*)

On the 2nd of May, the Prime Minister, Lord DERBY, in reply to a question put by Lord John RUSSELL, practically takes the same attitude of prudent expectation. (\*\*\*\*)

On the 9th, Lord STANLEY repeats with emphasis his previous declarations as to the guarantee given to the King of Holland in 1839:

"I take it for granted that the House is aware that England, in common with the rest of the signatories of the Treaty of 1839, actually guaranteed the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg to the King of Holland in the **most full, absolute, and unqualified manner**. That is an engagement which we at the present day did not make, and all that we have done is simply to adapt that engagement to the changed circumstances of the times, and to the position of the Grand Duchy consequent upon the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation. In doing this we have not incurred any fresh responsibility; we have rather limited and defined it; indeed, I conceive that so far from increasing, we have narrowed the responsibility which formerly rested upon this country in connection with Luxemburg whatever the amount of that responsibility may have been. (\*\*\*\*\*)

On the 13th of May, Lord DERBY announces in the House of Lords the "satisfactory termination of the Conference". He adds:

.....The Papers relating to this subject will be laid before your Lordships in a few days; but I may state that in consideration of the altered position of the Duchy of Luxemburg since its separation from the Germanic Confederation, it has been settled that for all future time that territory shall be neutralised; that it shall continue to form a part of the possessions of the King of Holland; that all the Powers shall agree to acknowledge that neutrality; that the Duchy shall be placed under the collective guarantee of all the Powers; that the Prussian garrison shall be withdrawn, with all its artillery and stores of war; that the fortress shall be dismantled — so that it shall no longer be a fortress — to the satisfaction of the King of Holland, and that the works

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVI — Pages 1253-4-5-6.

(\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVI — Page 1766.

(\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVI — Page 1786.

(\*\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVI — Pages 1869-1870.

(\*\*\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVII — Page 260.

shall not be repaired. It is further agreed that the relation which has hitherto existed between Luxemburg and Limburg shall be terminated, and that, henceforth, the latter shall form an integral part of the Kingdom of Holland. I am sure that your Lordships will hear with pleasure that an arrangement has been come to upon this subject which is calculated to preserve the peace of Europe.

LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY wished to know in what respect the present guarantee differed from that which previously existed ?

EARL OF DERBY: The former guarantee, which was under the collective guarantee of all the Powers of Europe, declared that Luxemburg should continue to form a part of the possessions of the King of Holland; whereas the present guarantee, which is also under the guarantee of the collective Powers, declares that that territory shall be neutralised.

LORD STANLEY OF ALDERLEY said, that the effect of the guarantee was that this country might be called upon to enforce the new Treaty of Luxemburg by force of arms in case of any breach of the neutrality of that territory committed by a third Power.

EARL OF DERBY: THE GUARANTEE IS NOT A JOINT AND SEPARATE GUARANTEE, BUT IS A COLLECTIVE GUARANTEE, and does not impose upon this country any special and separate duty of enforcing its provisions. It is a collective guarantee of all the Powers of Europe. It would, he thought, be better to defer any discussion upon the terms of the treaty until it was laid upon the table of the House. (\*)

This ambiguous declaration did not fail to arouse suspicion and disquietude in England.

On the 14th of June, a debate on the question is raised in the Commons by Mr. LABOUCHERE.

Some of his remarks are interesting in view of the present situation:

.....The guarantees entered into by this country for the independence of Belgium and of Turkey stood on very different ground from that given recently with respect to Luxemburg. Nobody could contend that the possession of Luxemburg, either by France or Germany, would menace or disturb our interests.

.....At the time when a war with America seemed likely, we might have felt grateful to the Emperor of the French for stepping forward with a guarantee affecting Montreal and the Canadian Lakes; but would his own subjects have been pleased ?

.....According to Mr. Moustier, the Foreign Minister of France, the "neutrality" of Luxemburg might not be inconsistent with the passage of troops through the Duchy. The noble Lord appeared to have admitted that a violation of the treaty would be constituted if an army marched through the territory, but a glance at the map would show that it was almost impossible that war could be waged between France and Germany without an army passing through the Luxemburg territory. If therefore we were to take Count Bismarck's view of our obligations, we should be bound to go to war. NOTHING HAD DONE SO MUCH HARM TO THE ENGLISH NAME AS A CERTAIN RECKLESSNESS IN UNDERTAKING OBLIGATIONS AND A GREAT DISCRETION IN FULFILLING THEM.

.....Even supposing that England might be brought to raise armies and find treasure for a war to prevent a Dutch province from becoming German or French, was it likely that our colonies would incur the risks of war for such an object? (\*\*)

The Foreign Secretary, Lord STANLEY, replies at length :

I need not say that the only possible interest we had in the matter was to maintain the peace of Europe. We had no wish to give a triumph to France over Prussia, or to Prussia over France. We only wanted to keep the peace, and it was known to everybody that we had no other interest...

.....Even if England had been able to keep out of it, which of course we should have desired, it might have been difficult, especially if Belgium had been attacked; but even if we had, we should have suffered severely in our trade. But we should have suffered also in another way to which I attach some importance. The parties concerned would have said, and would have said with a considerable degree of plausibility, "You are the real authors of this war". They would have said, "Everybody else had agreed, an arrangement was come to, you had only to give an engagement which did not bind you to much, you had only to hold up your hand to stop this war, and you declined to do it."

.....I must repeat, notwithstanding the denial of the hon. Member for Middlesex, that we had in 1839 given a guarantee of the possession of Luxemburg by Holland in terms plain, clear, and unconditional. Article I of that treaty between the five Powers, on the one hand, and Belgium, on the other, declares the annexed articles of the same validity as if textually inserted in this Act, and thus placed under the guarantee of the Powers. The same words were inserted in the treaty between Holland and Belgium. The second of those annexed articles, after defining the limits of the territory of Luxemburg,

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVII — Page 379.

(\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVII — Pages 1910-1-2-3.

declares in express terms that this territory shall continue to belong to the Grand Duke, and that it is placed under the guarantee of the Great Powers. The first article had equally defined the territory which was to belong to Belgium. England was one of the signatories of that treaty, and thereby guaranteed the possession of Luxemburg to the Grand Duke. That guarantee has always been recognised ; it was appealed to in the beginning of these negotiations, and though no action was taken upon it, I do not understand that any attempt was made to dispute its validity.

All that we have done in the treaty of last month was to extend the guarantee which had been given before to the neutralisation as well as to the possession of the territory in question. So far, no doubt, there is an increase in the responsibility incurred. On the other hand, the House must bear in mind that whereas the place, the possession of which was guaranteed was formerly a strong fortress in the military occupation of a foreign Power, it is now a place deprived of fortifications, without a garrison, and therefore destitute of nearly all its value as an object of rivalry in the event of war. Suppose, for argument's sake, that Prussia had at any time desired to possess herself of this territory, who was to prevent her ? She actually held it ; yet we had guaranteed its possession to the Grand Duke. Further, **THE GUARANTEE NOW GIVEN IS COLLECTIVE ONLY.** That is an important distinction. It means this, that in the event of a violation of neutrality all the Powers who have signed the treaty may be called upon for their collective action. No one of those Powers is liable to be called upon to act singly or separately. It is a case, so to speak, of "limited liability". **WE ARE BOUND IN HONOUR** — you cannot place a legal construction upon it — to see in concert with others that these arrangements are maintained. But if the other Powers join with us, it is certain that there will be no violation of neutrality. If they, situated exactly as we are, decline to join, we are not bound single-handed to make up the deficiencies of the rest. Such a guarantee has obviously rather the character of a moral sanction to the arrangements which it defends than that of a contingent liability to make war. It could, no doubt, give a right to make war, but it would not necessarily impose the obligation. That would be a question to consider when the occasion arose. (\*)

Another part of that speech is peculiarly interesting in view of what happened three years later. Endeavouring to prove the peaceful intentions of Prussia, Lord Stanley says :

What has Prussia to gain by war ? Certainly not military reputation ; she possesses that in a higher degree than at any former period of her history. Not accession of territory. **NOBODY SUPPOSES SHE DESIRES TO TAKE POSSESSION OF ANY FRENCH PROVINCES.** Not German unity. German unity — **A GREAT AND DESIRABLE OBJECT** — is for all practical purposes secured already. (\*\*)

These words were uttered three years after the brutal conquest of Schleswig-Holstein, one year after Sadowa, three years before the cynical falsification of the Ems despatch, which precipitated the Franco-Prussian war, four years previous to the wresting of Alsace-Lorraine from France.

On the 20th of June, Lord John RUSSELL brings the question again before the House of Lords. He approves the adhesion of the British Government to the Treaty ; but he considers that Great Britain has thereby assumed the obligation of guaranteeing its execution :

There were two subjects which must have engaged the attention of Her Majesty's Government in connection with this question of Luxemburg. One was, whether it was so much for the interests of this country that the peace of Europe should be preserved as to induce Her Majesty's Government to interpose its diplomatic offices ; and the other was, whether to maintain peace in Europe, we might not have to pay a higher price than the product was worth.

But even if Prussia and France were at war I do not think that either of them would be disposed to violate the neutrality of Luxemburg, because they would have to consider that by doing so they would provoke the interposition and hostility of the great Powers who have consented to give this guarantee... (\*\*\*)

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVII — Pages 1918-19-21-2-3.

(\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVII — Page 1920.

(\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Pages 144-6.



The Prime Minister, Lord DERBY, explains as follows the attitude of the Government:

The collective guarantee of the neutral Powers was made a "sine qua non", and if England had refused to join, upon England would have rested the heavy responsibility of a European war.

I do not entirely agree with the noble Earl [Earl Russell] as to the extent of our responsibility, even supposing it to be of the character he has described. If it had been a continuance of the guarantee first given, I should think it a very serious matter, because the guarantee of the possession of Luxemburg to the King of Holland was a joint and several guarantee similar to that which was given with regard to the independence and neutrality of Belgium; it was binding individually and separately upon each of the Powers. That was the nature of the guarantee which was given with regard to Belgium and with regard to the possession of Luxemburg by the King-Duke. Now a guarantee of neutrality is very different from a guarantee of possession. If France and Prussia were to have a quarrel between themselves, and either were to violate the neutrality of Luxemburg by passing their troops through the duchy for the purpose of making war on the other, we might, if the guarantee had been individual as well as joint, have been under the necessity of preventing that violation, and the same obligation would have rested upon each guarantor; but as it is we are not exposed to so serious a contingency, because the guarantee is only collective — that is to say, it is binding only upon all the Powers in their collective capacity; they all agree to maintain the neutrality of Luxemburg, but not one of those Powers is bound to fulfil the obligation alone. That is a most important difference, because the only two Powers by which the neutrality of Luxemburg is likely to be infringed are two of the parties to the collective guarantee; and therefore, if either of them violate the neutrality, the obligation on all the others would not accrue. (\*)

Lord CLARENDON, late Foreign Secretary in the Palmerston Cabinet, practically endorses Lord Derby's views:

.....With regard to the guarantee, I will go somewhat further than the noble Earl at the head of the Government and say that if we had undertaken the same guarantee in the case of Luxemburg as we did in the case of Belgium, we should, in my opinion, have incurred an additionnal and very serious responsibility. I look upon our guarantee in the case of Belgium as an individual guarantee, and have always so regarded it; but this is a collective guarantee. No one of the Powers, therefore, can be called upon to take single action, even in the improbable case of any difficulty arising. I cannot help regarding this guarantee as a moral obligation, a point of honour — as an agreement which cannot be violated without dishonour by any of the signing Powers; and I believe that an agreement of that nature may be more binding than the precise terms in which a treaty is couched, for it is a characteristic of these times than when formal treaties are found inconvenient, they are disregarded. (\*\*)

Encouraged by this attitude of the leading diplomat in the Opposition, Lord DERBY thought the moment was opportune to minimise the responsibilities assumed by Great Britain:

It is quite true that, if France were to invade the territory of Luxemburg, the other Powers, though they might be called upon to resist the invasion, would not be bound to do so. They might or might not think it proper to defend the neutrality of Luxemburg, but no individual Power could be compelled, under the treaty, to render assistance. (\*\*\*)

This brought a protest from Lord John RUSSELL, who had so long given the tone of British policy and diplomacy:

I just rise to say that I do not put the same interpretation upon the treaty as the noble Earl does. My belief is that if France were to violate the treaty and invade the territory of Luxemburg, the other Powers who are parties to the treaty would feel bound to call upon France to retire. (\*\*\*\*)

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Pages 150-1.

(\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Page 152.

(\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Page 157.

(\*\*\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Pages 157-8.

That Lord John would have put the same interpretation on the Treaty, in case of a violation of Luxemburg by Prussia, there can be no doubt.

These differences of opinion among the leading statesmen of England were far from tending to restore public confidence. On the 4th of July, the question was again brought up in the House of Lords, by lord HOUGHTON:

The Duchy of Luxemburg has, on account of its peculiar local position, acquired an importance which its natural extent and character among the States of Europe would not justify. In the eyes of Prussia the neutrality of Luxemburg means the integrity of Belgium; while in the eyes of France the neutrality of Luxemburg means the integrity of Holland. Thus grave questions are involved in what is apparently a small and trivial matter. To use the expressive words of the Professor of International Law in the University of Oxford,

“If the default of one of the parties to this Treaty does discharge all other parties from their obligations, then the sole case in which assistance can be invoked is a case in which that assistance is impossible.”

.....I believe that by the words of the Treaty the parties are bound to resist any aggression whether it proceeds from one of the signatories or not.

I therefore ask the First Lord of the Treasury, what is the construction which Her Majesty's Government place on the words “collective guarantee” (*garantie collective*) in the Treaty of the 11th of May, 1867, relative to the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg? (\*)

The Earl of DERBY endeavours to dispel Lord Houghton's apprehensions, which were but the expression of opinions held by a large section of the British people:

.....Suppose that Prussia with a view of making war on France, or France with a view of making war upon Prussia, were to enter the territory of Luxemburg — thereby, of course, violating its neutrality by the mere passage of an army, for I am not dealing with the question of occupation or possession, but of violating the neutrality of Luxemburg by passing an army through it — does the noble Lord mean to say that all the guaranteeing Powers in this Treaty of 1867, or each singly, would be bound by the obligations thrown on them by this treaty to go to war against the Power — whichever it might be — which entered Luxemburg with an army? Would Prussia desire this interpretation of the treaty? Suppose, in anticipation of any invasion by France, Prussia thought it necessary to make defensive advances into Luxemburg, would Prussia contend that all the other Powers would be thereby bound to take part with France in a war against her for the purpose of vindicating the neutrality of Luxemburg? And supposing, in a case, that Russia and Austria held aloof from the fulfilment of their portion of the guarantee in the event of any case for interference arising, does the noble Lord for a moment contend that England — situated as she is, and absolutely unable to put a sufficient military force on the Continent for preserving this neutrality — has contracted the obligation of enforcing the guarantee which she gave in common with all the other Powers of Europe?

I say again that by a collective guarantee it is well understood that while IN HONOUR all the Powers who are parties to it severally engage to maintain, for their own part, a strict respect for the territory for which neutrality is guaranteed; and although undoubtedly, any one Power has a perfect right to declare a *casus belli* if she think fit because of the violation of the guarantee, yet a single Power is not bound to take up the cudgels for all the other Powers with whom she gave a collective guarantee. I can give no further interpretation of the treaty than this — that as far as the honour of England is concerned she will be bound to respect the neutrality of Luxemburg; and I expect that all the other Powers will equally respect it; but she is not bound to take upon herself the Quixotic duty, in the case of a violation of the neutrality of Luxemburg by one of the other Powers, of interfering to prevent its violation — because we have only undertaken to guarantee it in common with all the other great Powers of Europe. The integrity of the neutrality of Luxemburg must not rest upon the force of arms of any particular one of the guaranteeing Powers; but upon the honour of all the guaranteeing Powers together, upon the general obligation taken in the face of Europe by all the signatory Powers; and if the neutrality should be violated by any one of them, then I say it is not a case of obligation, but a case of discretion with each of the other signatory Powers as to how far they should singly or collectively take upon themselves to vindicate the neutrality guaranteed. (\*\*)

(\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Pages 967-8.

(\*\*) Hansard — Vol. CLXXXVIII — Pages 973-4.

These clever but rather disingenuous discriminations between “honour” and “obligation”, or between “individual” and “collective” guarantees, were not palatable to the broad common sense and English bluntness of Lord John RUSSELL. Against the distinction made by Lord Derby he firmly protests once more:

The explanations given by the noble Lord, reported as they have been in the newspapers, and otherwise, have created a very unpleasant feeling in Prussia, and... it is commonly said there that IT IS NO USE TO SIGN A TREATY WITH ENGLAND, because England will find a means of escaping from the obligations imposed on her by it.

..... The noble Earl seemed to imply that because there was no individual guarantee, there was no individual obligation; but he considered that a moral obligation would rest upon this country which might have to be met. Now, with regard to this it strikes me that if there is a moral obligation, that moral obligation must entirely depend for its execution upon the circumstances which at any future time may exist. If one of those two Powers, France or Prussia, were to violate the neutrality of Luxemburg, and the Power which objected and protested against that violation were to appeal to the other Powers, I should myself consider that there would be a moral obligation upon those Powers to call upon the Power so violating the neutrality to withdraw from its position, and to enforce that appeal if necessary by resorting to arms. That appears to be the meaning of a moral obligation.

I do not myself believe that either France or Prussia have any intention of violating their engagements with regard to Luxemburg; but I think it would be a very unfortunate thing if this country were to be led into a mistaken notion of the nature of the obligation incurred under the treaty and thus be led so to act as to create the impression that we were willing to incur obligations without the intention of fulfilling them when the time arrived for our so doing. I hope that no such occasion may arise; but if it does arise, I trust that whatever may at the time be found to be the moral obligation of this country will be punctually and faithfully performed. (\*)

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In the present difficulties, Sir Edward Grey has thought proper to act according to the views expressed in 1867 by Lord Derby, Lord Clarendon and Lord Stanley. Perhaps he was right; but the pious expostulations that have filled the Parliaments and the press of the whole British Empire on “the respect of Britain for her signature” and her lofty resolution “to protect the weak against the aggression of the strong”, would have been better justified if the present British Government had adopted the views of Lord John Russell and Lord Houghton. That this at least must be the opinion of the poor Luxemburgers is quite likely.

### III

## “The Empire of the East”

Reproduced from the “Contemporary Review”, September, 1911. The italics and capitals indicate passages upon which attention is called. They are not used in the original).

*For Englishmen this war is primarily a struggle between Germany and France. FOR THE GERMANS IT IS EMPHATICALLY A RUSSO-GERMAN WAR. It was our secret naval commitment to France, and our fatal entanglement through ten years in the struggle for a European balance of power, which sent our fleets to sea. It is our sympathy with her which makes the one human link that binds us*

to the Triple Entente. We have dramatised the struggle (and this clearly was for Sir Edward Grey the dominant consideration) as an attempt to crush France. German thinking followed other lines. Alike for the deputies in the Reichstag and for the mob in the streets of Berlin, the enemy is Russia. It is true, indeed, that if the war should end in the defeat of the Triple Entente, some part of the consequences of defeat will be borne by France. It is clear that German statesmen hoped to acquire some part at least of her extensive and valuable colonial possessions, and on her no doubt would have fallen the financial brunt of the war. She would have paid in money and in colonies for her imprudence in allying herself to Russia. But in spite of this, her place in Germany's imagination was secondary. Her army must indeed be broken before Russia could be dealt with. That was a fatality, a detail in the mechanics of the problem which affected its central political purpose hardly more than the resistance of the Belgians. *THE POLITICS WHICH MADE THE WAR, AND THE SENTIMENT WHICH SUPPORTED IT HAD REFERENCE EXCLUSIVELY TO RUSSIA.* Read the speech by which the Chancellor induced the Reichstag to vote the war-credit without a dissentient voice; the only mention of France in it is a reply to the French accusation that German troops had violated the French frontier. The illuminating White Paper (Denkschrift) in which the history of the outbreak of the war is set out from the German official standpoint, contains hardly so much as an incidental reference to France. More significant still is the speech in which Dr. Haase, on behalf of the Social Democrats in the Reichstag, while repudiating the diplomacy which made the war, accepted on behalf of his comrades the duty of patriotic defence. He, too, made no reference to France. "For our people", he declared, "and for the future of its liberties, much, if not everything, depends on a victory over Russian despotism, stained, as it is, with the blood of its noblest subjects." *It is for us in this country of the first importance to follow the direction of German thought. If we are to understand why the war was made at all, if we are to grasp the reasons which will make it on the German side an obstinate and determined struggle, if we are to think out with any hope of success the problem of shortening it, we must realise that IT IS THE FEAR OF RUSSIA WHICH DROVE GERMAN DIPLOMACY INTO A PREVENTIVE WAR, and in the end mobilised even the Social Democrats behind German diplomacy.* To the diplomatists and the statesmen the issue was from the first not merely whether Austria or Russia should exert a hegemony in the Balkans, but also whether Russia, using Serbia as her vanguard, should succeed in breaking up the Austrian Empire. To the masses of the German people, the fate of Serbia and even of Bosnia was a matter of profound indifference. A month before the war broke out, three Germans in four would probably have said that not all the Serbs in Christendom were worth the bones of one Pomeranian grenadier (\*). But the Russian mobilisation and the outbreak of war made even for the German masses a supreme and only too intelligible issue. There is rooted deep in the memory of the German people a recollection of the exploits of the Cossacks during the Seven Years

(\*) A reminder of Bismarck's saying.

War. The simplest peasant of the Eastern marches has his traditions of devastated fields and ruined villages. He knows, moreover, that the intervening generations which have transformed the West, have left the Russian steppes still barbarous. *Even for the Social Democrat the repugnant thought that he was marching out to shoot down his French and Belgian comrades, was overborne by the imperious necessity of arming to defend his soil against the hordes which the Russian Tsar had mobilised.*

The broad fact about the general war of 1914 is that it is the postponed sequel of the Balkan war of 1912. We all congratulated each other that Sir Edward Grey's diplomacy and the Conference of London had enabled the Eastern peoples to settle the Eastern question without involving the Great Powers in war. The armaments of the Great Powers betrayed their belief that a war averted is only a war postponed. For two years this chaotic struggle, which came in the end with such vertiginous speed, had cast its shadow before it. The first move in the last round of the war of armaments was the direct consequence of the creation of the Balkan League. In justifying the increase of the peace-effectives of its army the German Government pointed to the new fact of the entry on the European scene of these young and victorious Balkan armies, and spoke bluntly of a possible struggle between the Slav and Teuton worlds. There followed the reply of France and Russia, the return in the one to Three Years' Service, and in the other the imprudently advertised schemes of military re-organisation, with its vast naval expenditure, its new strategic railways near the German frontier, its re-armament of the artillery, and its gigantic increase in the standing "peace" army. Russia (so an official memorandum declared) would henceforth be able to assume in case of need not merely a defensive, but an offensive strategy. The early months of this year witnessed the outbreak of a military panic in the German press. The fear inspired by the growth of the Tsar's armies was beginning to tell on German nerves, and a pamphlet to which the German Crown Prince contributed an approving note, predicted that the Slav world would have completed its armaments by the year 1916, and would then attempt to deal the death-blow to the German peoples. *If Germany has by her own act made the general war in 1914, it is chiefly because her military caste, moved by the superb fear that is the typical emotion of every ruling class which bases itself on force, was convinced that it would sooner or later have to meet a Russian challenge.*

The German White Paper explains the political issue which was the obverse of this military rivalry. For a generation we in this country have thought of the Eastern question as an issue between Turkey and the Christian races of the Balkans. With the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in Europe the Eastern question became primarily an Austrian question. Russia and Austria, up to the eve of the Young Turkish revolution, had been content to divide the hegemony of the Near East. They worked in close association; they presided jointly over the Macedonian reforms; they even recognised a certain division of spheres of influence. Austria was allowed by Russia to exert a predominant pressure upon Servia, while Russia was the leading partner in all that con-

cerned Bulgaria. It was never, at the best, an easy arrangement to maintain. Austria was always detested in Belgrade, and the dominant political party in Serbia, the Radicals, were vehemently Russophile. With the murder of King Alexander, and the coming of King Peter, the moral influence of Russia in Serbia became supreme, but the little kingdom remained none the less within the Austrian sphere, until the Bosnian crisis shattered the whole conception of an Austro-Russian *condominium* in the Balkans. *From the autumn of 1909 onwards, Serbia became as absolutely and almost as openly the protégé of Russia, and the tool of Russian policy, as Montenegro had been for generations. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the dominant personality in Belgrade was not King Peter, nor yet M. Pachitch, but the brilliant, energetic, unscrupulous Russian Minister, the late M. de Hartwig. He formed the Balkan League, and he also encouraged the Servians to tear up the Treaty of Partition, which the Tsar had guaranteed.* There were several reasons why Russian policy regarded the Servians as its favoured foster-children, and willingly aggrandised them at the expense of the Bulgarians. The Servians, in the first place, have always been the more pliable, the less independent of the Balkan Slav peoples. But while the Bulgarians were useful as a piece in an anti-Turkish policy, the Servians were doubly valuable, for they were indispensable to any move against Austria. The annexation of Bosnia, so far from being accepted by the Servians as a final and irrevocable fact, had actually been the starting point of an agitation more conscious, more open, and more reckless than any which had preceded it. The triumph of Servian arms in Macedonia, first over the Turks and then over the Bulgarians, was accepted by most Servians as the presage of the greater victory to come. There was evident a tremendous heightening of the national consciousness. Some of its effects worked uncompensated mischief. It showed itself as brutal intolerance towards the Albanians and the Bulgars in Macedonia. It created a militarism wholly alien to the democratic traditions of the Balkan races. But it also set the nation to the work of organising itself for the future with a new seriousness and a new devotion. Under her two last Obrenovitch Kings, Serbia had been nothing but a meaningless and isolated *enclave* in the Balkans, wedged between Austria and Bulgaria, without a future and without a mission. Her national life was stagnant and corrupt. The coming of the new dynasty, and still more the breach between Austria and Russia, opened a brilliant path before her. She believed at last that the re-union of all the Servian peoples was possible, and she resolved that it should come about under her leadership. She saw herself destined to do for the Serbs what Piedmont had done for the Italians. The adventure might seem to sober minds impossible. Serbia in isolation could hardly dream of challenging Austria with success, even if she had the moral and material resources which enabled Piedmont to expand into the Kingdom of Italy. But the Servians remembered that Piedmont did not overcome Austria by her own resources. She had the Emperor Napoleon behind her. If the Servians armed and plotted for the liberation of Bosnia and the other Serb lands under the Austrian yoke, it was with the firm conviction that when the hour of destiny struck, Russia would stand behind them.

*When historians come to deal with the real causes of this general war, it is possible that exact documentary evidence may show how far Russian diplomacy stood behind the Greater Servian propaganda. The general presumption is strong. No one doubts that Russian influence was supreme in Belgrade. The Serbs owed much to their own arms, but on the whole they owed more to Russian diplomacy. But for Russia the Austrians would have crushed them in 1909; but for Russia, Austria would certainly not have remained neutral during the two Balkan wars. To Russian pressure Servia owed such of her conquests in Albania as she was allowed to retain, and but for Russia, Austria would have torn up the iniquitous Treaty of Bucharest. There were more material bonds between the Great Power and her satellite. The Servian soldiers made the winter campaign of 1912-1913 in Russian great-coats, and the war was financed by the French banks which do nothing in the Balkans that would run counter to Russian policy. When the full tide of Servian aspirations set towards Bosnia, and the National Union (Narodna Odbrana) began to turn against Austria all the criminal "comitadji" methods of agitation consecrated by long usage in Macedonia, Russia, had she chosen, might have set her veto on a development of Servian policy which threatened European peace. Deserted by Russia, Servian independence would not have been worth twelve month's purchase. It is this absolute dependence of Servia upon Russian countenance and support, which makes it probable that when Servia openly launched and assisted the Great Servian propaganda, she did this with Russia's approval. This propaganda involved much more than a mental disturbance in the minds of the Servian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were organised in patriotic leagues and clubs with a view to an insurrection in the future. It had begun to smuggle arms, and it had been guilty of a series of assassinations of Austrian officials, to which the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his Consort came as the climax. The historical memorandum in the German White Paper declares bluntly that this reckless and provocative attitude was possible for Servia "only because she believed that she had Russian support in her activities." The memorandum goes on to make an even graver statement. After referring to the original creation of the Balkan League under Russian auspices, it continues:—*

*"Russian Statesmen planned the rise of a new Balkan League under Russian protection, a league which was aimed not at Turkey — now vanished from the Balkans — but against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The idea was that Servia should be compensated for the cession of its Macedonian acquisitions to Bulgaria by receiving Bosnia and Herzegovina at Austro-Hungary's expense."*

I am far from suggesting that a charge of this kind, made though it is in the Kaiser's name with the full responsibility of his Chancellor in an official document addressed to the Reichstag at a peculiarly solemn moment, can be taken as proven. It is in itself probable, and it has long been as the current gossip of Balkan circles. I insist upon it not so much because to me it carries conviction, as because it furnishes for the first time an intelligible explanation of the policy which Austria and Germany have followed in provoking a European war.

It is not easy in the midst of the horrors and resentments of war to view such a situation as this in cold retrospect. The peril in front

of Austria was grave, but it was not immediate. Russia had not at the first essay succeeded in restoring the Balkan League. Bulgaria could not forget her resentment, and had become a loosely attached associate of the Triple Alliance. If the Slavs were to choose their own hour, they would wait presumably until the Balkan armies had somewhat recovered from the exhaustion of two campaigns, and until the Russian military re-organisation was completed. But there was good reason to infer that, sooner or later, the blow would be struck. A rising in Bosnia, organised by Servian comitadjis, would bring Servia herself into the field, and behind Servia would be the Balkan League and the Russian Empire. *Such conspiracies as this are so remote from Western habits of life and thought, so inconceivable in our own experience, that we are apt to dismiss them as fantastic. They are the stuff of daily life in the Balkans, and we may do Austrian statesmen the justice of supposing that their fears were sincere.* An enlightened Power in their place would not have acted as they did. The "Great Servian" idea is dangerous to Austria, because she lacks the courage to be liberal without reserves. Servia may compare herself to Piedmont, but the parallel is imperfect. Her culture is so backward, her politics are so parochial and so corrupt, her economic life is so primitive and so stagnant, that she has nothing to commend her to the Austrian Serbs save only the community of blood. *They have in Austria access to the main currents of European culture, a share in the larger politics of a great Empire, a place in a vigorous commercial system. One-third of them are Catholics, who have no reason to hope for equal treatment from an Orthodox State, whose record in Macedonia is a defiance of toleration, and another third are Moslems, who will emigrate en masse if the Servians should conquer Bosnia.* Even the remaining third, who are Orthodox Serbs, would not have been ready-made material for a Servian propaganda, if Austria had known how to treat them with generosity. Faced by this Great Servian danger, and forced to realise at last that it was serious, a big man in Count Berchtold's place would have resolved to make Austria a home so attractive even to Servian idealists, that the half-civilised kingdom over the border, with its backward culture and Oriental morals, would have lured and beckoned them in vain. He would have made them feel, as the Poles have long felt, that they are Austrians with a share in the fortunes of the Empire. He would have made their autonomy a handsome reality. He would have banished the spies and the policemen, enemies of the Austrian idea more dangerous than all the Servian bomb-throwers and comitadjis. He would have released the Croats from the Magyar yoke, and bidden Dalmatians, Croats, and Bosnians realise their Great Servia to their heart's content within the Austrian Empire itself. Against such a policy, conceived with some boldness of imagination and executed with good faith and tact, the incitements and conspiracies of Belgrade would have been powerless. Count Berchtold is neither a Liberal nor a man of genius. He acted after the Serajevo murder as the average Imperialist bureaucrat commonly does act in such cases. He tightened his police system. He made Austrian rule a little more than usually hateful to men of Servian race. He determined to crush and humiliate Servia, and realising that behind Servia stood Russia, he turned to his ally for aid.



The policy on which Austria and Russia determined is a matter of history, and the German White Paper describes it with an approach to frankness. This interesting document has not been fairly reproduced by our daily newspapers, and the main passage may be worth translating at length:—

“In these circumstances Austria was driven to the conclusion that the dignity and self-preservation of the Monarchy alike forbade her to watch this movement from across the frontier any longer in passivity. She communicated her view to us and asked our advice. We were able with all our hearts to inform our ally that we shared her opinion of the situation, and we assured her of our approval for any action which she might take to put an end to the movement in Serbia directed against the integrity of the Monarchy. We were well aware that any military action by Austria against Serbia, might bring Russia on the scene, and involve us in war by reason of the obligations of our alliance. Realising, as we did, that the vital interests of Austria-Hungary were at stake, we could neither counsel our ally to a pliability inconsistent with her dignity, nor refuse her our aid in this difficult moment. Nor could we forget that our own interests were nearly threatened by this continual Servian agitation. Had the Servians been allowed, with the help of Russia and France, to endanger the integrity of the neighbouring Monarchy much longer, the consequence must have been the gradual disruption of Austria, and the subjection of the whole Slav world to the Russian sceptre, with the result that the position of the German race in central Europe would have become untenable.”

There lies, in its naked simplicity, the German case for this war. *The provocations followed an alternating series. Russia encouraged the Great Servian movement, which aimed at the break-up of Austria, whereupon Austria struck at Serbia, and thereby challenged Russia. The issue now was, in plain words, whether Serbia should become an Austrian vassal or remain a Russian tool. While a diplomatic accommodation was still possible, Russia took the menacing step of proclaiming a general mobilisation, and Germany replied with an ultimatum, followed in a few hours by war. THIS WAR IS A CO-OPERATIVE CRIME. TO ITS MAKING HAVE GONE RUSSIAN AMBITIONS AND GERMAN FEARS. IT WOULD BE AS JUST TO SAY THAT THE REAL AGGRESSOR WAS THE POWER WHICH STOOD BEHIND SERBIA, AS IT WOULD BE TO SAY THAT IT WAS THE POWER WHICH FIRST LIT THE CONFLAGRATION BY HURLING ITS SHELLS AT BELGRADE.* On their own showing, the Germans had planned a bold challenging stroke, which might lead them into a preventive war. There is evidence enough in our own White Paper that they did not believe that Russia would fight. They thought that they had defied her in good time before her armaments were ready. They had bullied her with success in the similar crisis of 1909, and with the characteristic clumsiness of Bismarckian psychology, they did not realise that a public act of bullying can never be repeated. It was precisely because Russia had yielded in 1909, that she could not yield again. It is nonsense to say, as M. Sazonoff said, that the prestige of Russia as a Great Power would be gone, if Serbia became an Austrian vassal. Serbia had been an Austrian vassal throughout the lifetime of King Milan, and for many a year after his abdication. But it may be true to say that Russia would have lost in prestige, if Serbia had been torn from her orbit by Austrian arms and German threats. It is more to the point that such a humiliation would have ended the dream of a Great Serbia for ever. *THAT WAS THE REAL ISSUE.* What Russia dreaded was not so much the humiliation of her little Slav brothers, the Serbs; she had watched the humiliation of her other little brothers in Bulgaria with equanimity.

and even with satisfaction. The Servians, however, were more than brothers; they were tools. They were an indispensable piece in the game of chess for the Empire of the East.

*The historian of the future will be in one sense more biassed in his judgment of this moving chapter of history than we are ourselves. He will give his verdict, as historians commonly do, to the side that wins. To us the issue is unknown, and we must divide our wonder and our censures. The Pan-Slavists have brought the whole of European civilisation to a test which may come near submerging it, in order to accomplish their dream of racial unity. The Germans, by rashly precipitating an issue which might never, in fact, have been forced upon them, may well have brought upon themselves the very catastrophe which they dreaded.* A preventive war, if it is not a crime as inexcusable as a war of naked aggression, is always a folly. Nothing required Austria to fight now. From Serbia she might have had ample reparation, with pledges for her future good behaviour. The crime of Serajevo was far from raising Serbia's prestige among the Austrian Slavs; it had, on the contrary, lowered and besmirched it. A policy of conciliation might have rendered any insurrection impossible. Nor was Russia's star in the ascendant in the counsels of Europe. *Persian affairs had led to a marked cooling in Sir Edward Greys' hitherto uncritical regard for Russia. THE ANGLO-GERMAN FRIENDSHIP WAS DEEPENING, and something like the "Utopian" proposal of our White Paper (Sir Edward Grey's conception of a collective guarantee by the Triple Entente that it would allow no aggression against the Triple Alliance) might have isolated Russia in the future, if, in fact, she meditated a war of Slav against Teuton.* (\*) What is clear to-day is, that Germany, reasoning in cold blood amid profound peace, that Austria's future status was threatened by this Pan-Servian danger, has made a war in which the chief issue may soon be whether Austria can continue to exist.

If the Triple Entente should be victorious, and if Russian policy is allowed to dominate the settlement, it is hard to draw a fortunate horoscope for Austria. A Russian proclamation has already snatched from Germany the Polish province of Posen, and from Austria the loyal and contented Poles of Galicia. We may be sure, if Servian arms should meet with any measure of success, that Russia will aim at creating a Greater Serbia by amalgamating Croatia, Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina with Serbia and Montenegro. The *tertius gaudens*, as the Balkan struggle shows, is apt to exact a heavy price for his neutrality. Italy will not forget that Trient is peopled by Italians, and that the miserable Albanians will require some strong hand to restore their wretched country to order and peace. Roumania is a formidable military power, and at the moment when the struggle becomes desperate, her weight might be decisive in one or other of the Eastern scales of power. She has no love for either Empire, though her king is a Hohenzollern. Russia took Bessarabia from her, and Hungary is the mistress of a large Roumanian population in Transylvania. She may elect to move her armies into one or the other of these provinces, but more probably she will sell her neutrality for an assurance that the victor will reward her.

(\*) See despatch 101, quoted at page 19.

Bulgaria is in the same case. An armed neutrality will pay her best. If Russia wins, then Servia, rich in her new acquisitions, can well afford to give up a part at least of Macedonia. If Austria wins, then a crushed and broken Servia will be compelled to face partition. In either case, if Bulgaria plays her cards prudently, and sells her neutrality to both sides, she is certain to obtain compensation. The plight of Turkey is less fortunate. A victorious Russia would mean for her the speedy loss of her Armenian provinces. From the German Powers (to whom, on the whole, her sympathies go), she can look only for some countenance in an effort to regain some of her lost islands from Greece. The whole of the Near East is in the melting-pot, but the central question of all is in what shape Austria will emerge from the tremendous test. A decisive victory would mean for her that Russian hegemony would be ended in Europe. She would have become herself the rival Slavonic Power. She would either annex Servia outright, or reduce her to vassalage, while Roumania, Bulgaria, and Turkey, each aggrandised somewhat by the pursuit of a profitable neutrality, would be attached to her as grateful satellites. She would dominate the Balkans, and in the act she would have solved triumphantly the problem of her own internal cohesion. A beaten Russia would no longer attract the Southern Slavs. *THE OTHER ALTERNATIVE IS, IF POSSIBLE, STILL MORE CATAclySMIC.* If Russia wins and has her way, little will be left of Austria save her German provinces, and these might be incorporated at length in a German Empire which had lost Posen and Alsace-Lorraine. Roumania and Servia would emerge as big States, attached by interest to the Russian system. Bulgaria would be reconciled by the gift of Macedonia. The doubtful points would be the future of the Czechs and Magyars. But whatever their fate might be, the German Powers would have been cut off for ever from the East, and Russia with some millions of Poles and Ruthenians added to her territories, and the Southern Slavs enlisted as her allies and vanguard, would dominate the Eastern Mediterranean and overshadow Turkey, as to-day she overshadows Persia.

*WE ARE TAKING A PAROCHIAL VIEW OF ARMAGEDDON IF WE ALLOW OURSELVES TO IMAGINE THAT IT IS PRIMARILY A STRUGGLE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF BELGIUM AND THE FUTURE OF FRANCE. THE GERMANS ARE NEARER THE TRUTH WHEN THEY REGARD IT AS A RUSSO-GERMAN WAR. It began in a struggle for the hegemony of the Near East, with its pivotal point at Belgrade. It will end logically, if either side achieves a decisive success, in a melting of all the frontiers of the East, and the settlement by force of arms of the question whether its destinies shall be governed by Germany or by Russia. IT IS, TO MY MIND, AN ISSUE SO BARBAROUS, SO REMOTE FROM ANY REAL INTEREST OR CONCERN OF OUR DAILY LIFE IN THESE ISLANDS, THAT I CAN ONLY MARVEL AT THE ILLUSIONS, AND CURSE THE FATALITY WHICH HAVE MADE US BELLIGERENTS IN THIS STRUGGLE. We are neither Slavs nor Germans. How many of us, high or low, dare form a decided opinion as to whether Bosnia would in the end be happier under the native but intolerant and semi-civilised rule of the Serbs, or the alien but re-*

lately civilised rule of Austria? How many of us would dare to answer one by one the questions whether Poles and Ruthenians and Slovacks would be the happier for passing from Austrian to Russian rule? We have not even debated these questions, yet our arms are helping to settle them. Our fleet in the North Sea, our army in France may be winning for the Tsar millions of fresh subjects, and for the familiar process of forcible Russification unnumbered victims. They will pass from a higher to a lower civilisation, from a system usually tolerant and fitfully Liberal, to one which has not even begun to grasp the idea of toleration, and whose answer to Liberalism is the censorship, the prison, and the "truly Russian" pogrom. One may hope for some slow evolution in Russian politics. One may dream of a future federal organisation of its many nationalities. But are we so secure in our anticipation of that brighter future that we will back it by our arms? On the lower level of self-interest and Imperial expediency have we reason to desire a world in which the Balance of Power will lurch violently to the side of this unscrupulous and incalculable Empire? **WITHIN A YEAR FROM THE BREAKING OF GERMANY'S POWER** (if that is the result of this war), as Russia forces her way through the Dardanelles, dominates Turkey, overruns Persia, and bestrides the road to India, **OUR IMPERIALISTS WILL BE CALLING OUT FOR A STRONG GERMANY TO BALANCE A THREATENING RUSSIA.** A mechanical fatality has forced France into this struggle, and a comradeship, translated by secret commitments into a defensive alliance, has brought us into the war in her wake. It is no real concern of hers or of ours. **IT IS A WAR FOR THE EMPIRE OF THE EAST.** If our statesmanship is clear-sighted, it will stop the war before it has passed from a struggle for the defence of France and Belgium, into a colossal wrangle for the dominion of the Balkans and the mastery of the Slavs. When the campaign in the West has ended, as we all hope that in a few weeks it will end, in the liberation of French and Belgian soil from a deplorable invasion, the moment will have come to pause. To back our Western friends in a war of defence is one thing, to fling ourselves into the further struggle for the Empire of the East quite another. No call of the blood, no imperious calculation of self-interest, no hope for the future of mankind requires us to side with Slav against Teuton. We cannot wish that either Austria or Russia should dominate the Balkans, but if we had to make the choice in cold blood, most of us would prefer the more tolerant and more cultured German influence. If in the heat of battle, we allow ourselves to rush onward without reflection from a war of defence to a war of conquest, we shall find that all the old problems confront us anew. **ENTHUSIASTS FOR THIS HATEFUL WAR MAY APPLAUD IT AS AN EFFORT TO "DESTROY GERMAN MILITARISM". THAT IS A MEANINGLESS PHRASE. THE ALLIES MAY INDEED DESTROY THE GERMAN ARMIES, BUT NO ONE CAN DESTROY GERMAN MILITARISM, SAVE THE GERMAN PEOPLE ITSELF.** Crush that people, load it with indemnities, lop it of its provinces, encircle it with triumphant allies, and so far from turning to depose its Prussian leaders, it will rally behind them in a national struggle to recover its standing, its integrity, its power of free movement. Not France but Germany will arm to re-

cover lost provinces, and weave new alliances to adjust the ever-shifting balance of power. If once the world begins to play at mapmaking it will create unsatisfied appetites; there will be States enough to join with Germany in an effort to upset the settlement. The future will stretch before us, a new phase of the ruinous armed peace, destined to end, after further years of anger and waste, in another war of revenge. It lies with public opinion to limit our share in this quarrel, and to impose on our diplomacy, when victory in the West is won, a return to its natural rôle of peacemaker and mediator in a quarrel no longer its own.

H. N. BRAILSFORD.

#### IV

### “Predisposing and Precipitating Causes”

(Reproduced from the Ottawa “Citizen”, October 26th, 1914. Most of the italics and capitals were not used in the original).

I yield to the suggestion of *the Citizen* that I should “say something about the war” with a little hesitation but, upon the whole, with a feeling that during the currency of (I am afraid) a long war, we ought to consult together on its causes and probable effects, with a view to the consideration of the conditions of a re-established peace.

#### Mutual Misconception

*Perhaps the most discouraging feature of the present situation is the complete inability of Britisher and German to understand one another. Not only does each believe the other to be clearly and demonstrably wrong, but neither can, in the very least, appreciate the viewpoint of the other.* Leaders of religious thought in Germany regretfully agree (in their manifesto) that the United Kingdom has wantonly allied herself with “Asiatic barbarism”, in aid of a power (Russia) which, “in spite of its pledged word”, threatened the German frontiers, while the German

“government was exerting itself to localise the justifiable vengeance for an abominable Royal murder, and to avoid the outbreak of war between two great powers” (Russia and Austria).

In a reply signed by forty-two distinguished British theologians, it was said:

“It fills us with amazement that those who occupy the positions held by the signatories of this appeal should commit themselves to a statement of the political causes of the war, which departs so strangely from what seems to us to be the plain facts of this grave hour in European history.”

And the British divines, taking not the slightest notice of the principal point made by the Germans, proceeded to a narration of the events which was no more fair to Germany than was, to us, the German sweeping charge that

“Unnameable horrors have been committed against Germans living abroad—against women and children, against wounded and physicians—cruelties and shamelessness such as many a heathen and Mahomedan war has not revealed.”

The Germans say that Austria was right in her determination to punish Serbia, and that with the execution of that purpose no nation had a right to interfere; that the war ought to have been localised — that is, left to Austria and Serbia. The British disregard the point and assert: (1) That the British “government endeavoured to the utmost to maintain the peace of Europe” (which is not disputed); (2) that Germany was responsible for the failure of a proposal for an international conference (which without explanation is inaccurate); and (3) that British interposition “arose directly out of the question of Belgian neutrality” (which is also inaccurate).

### Classes of Causes

The war is due to causes of two kinds: (1) Predisposing, and (2) precipitating, and of these the precipitating (the only ones dealt with by the divines) are of infinitely less importance than the predisposing, for they relate to the immediate occasion of the war only, and not to underlying causes which, sooner or later, were sure to find their occasion. The *predisposing causes* may be placed under three headings: (A) *National antipathies and racial and religious antagonisms*; (B) *the modern system of huge European alliances*; and (C) *militarism, as expressed in the maxim “If you wish peace, prepare for war”*. The precipitating cause was Servian misconduct. *The German divines are wrong in saying that it was Russian mobilisation. And the British are wrong in regarding predisposing causes, and in alleging violation of Belgian neutrality as the reason for British intervention.*

### Nations and Races

The myriad incidents of war are soon forgotten. The ruins are rebuilt. The fields are re-sown. Monuments and printed pages alone remind us of the dead. But the hatreds live, and the detestations remain, and generations must peacefully pass before the fierce resentments, burned into a people's soul by suffering, can vanish. How long did angry passion survive the American war of independence and cloud the reason of both the ignorant and the educated? Its disappearance was not delayed by racial animosity and yet — how long? Racial antipathy is in the present day flaming fiercely in the Balkans. Not a hundred years, nor ten, nor one, has passed since the last fagot was added to that perpetual fire. Neighbouring peoples — yes, neighbours, among the same peoples, hate one another.

The prime predisposing cause of the present war was racial incompatibility, hardened into hatred by long years of bitter antagonism. Why could not Teuton and Slav have been sensible and have lived comfortably together? I don't know. Ask Ireland. Ask Asquith and Bonar Law. Ask the members of the School Board in Ottawa. It was

the fault of the other fellow. It always is. At all events, they could not do it, and did not, and hence the war. The murder of the heir to the Austrian throne was but the occasion of its outbreak, the precipitating cause, the last straw — like the blowing up of the *Ma'ne* in its relation to the United States war with Spain.

Servia, too, wanted more room. She wanted a strip of Adriatic eastern coast. Austria wanted all of it, and being much the stronger she secured in 1878 (at the end of the Russo-Turkish war) partial control of Bosnia and Herzegovina (on Servia's western boundary). In 1908 (while Russia was still convalescing), Austria annexed those countries. After the Balkan war (with British assistance) Austria turned Servia and Montenegro out of Skutari, and set up Albania as an independent sovereignty, between Servia and the sea.

Teuton did all that to the Slav, and the Slav replied (in the only way open to him) by redoubled hate, by systematic attempts upon the loyalty of Austria's Slav population, and by various acts of unneighbourly truculence. Brought to book in 1909, Servia pledged herself (31 March)—

“to renounce from now onwards the attitude of protest and opposition which she has adopted with regard to the annexation since last autumn. She undertakes, moreover, to modify the direction of her policy with regard to Austria-Hungary, and to live in future on good neighbourly terms with the latter.”

But that promise had no abating effect upon Servia's resentment, and after her successes in the Balkan wars, her conduct (culminating in the assassination) justified punishment — precipitated the war.

It is said as against Austria that her recent demands upon Servia meant war. I think they did. Austria intended to inflict military punishment. The United Kingdom has frequently felt herself compelled to do the like. What would she have done had she been in Austria's place, and if (as the last number of the *Round Table* has it)—

“Servia, proud of her record and largely increased in size and power, instantly became the focus of a violent pan-Southern Slav propaganda spread all through Bosnia-Herzegovina and southern Hungary, which aimed at detaching the Southern Slav territories from Austria-Hungary?”

Probably, after standing that sort of thing for some years and getting no satisfaction, the United Kingdom would have declared war upon Servia; and, if anybody had suggested interference or intervention, she would have warned them off as not being parties to the affair.

### Russia Involved

That is what Austria did, and that is how the war arose — precipitated out of predisposition. Why did it spread? The Servians are Slavs. And Russia is Slav. And she saw, in the affair, not merely military punishment of her kindred but their political subjection. Austria protested that such suspicions were groundless but appears to have been chary about binding herself too closely (White Paper, No. 79).

Sir Edward Grey made a splendid effort (1) to prevent war altogether, and (2) to localise it. He proposed a conference of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, and the British Divines say that

“the responsibility for the failure of this proposal rests solely with Germany, who alone raised objections.”

It would have been fairer to have said that Germany pointed out that the proposal “would be ineffective” (White Paper, No. 71); that Austria would not accept it — would not accept

“any form of mediation by the powers as between Austria and Servia” (No. 81);

that Germany proposed a direct exchange of views between Russia and Austria as “more agreeable to Austria” (No. 55); that the German minister assured Sir Edward that he

“was doing his very best both at Vienna and St. Petersburg to get the two governments to discuss the situation directly with each other and in a friendly way” (No. 71);

that Sir Edward Grey expressed his satisfaction

“that there is a prospect of direct exchange of views between the Russian and Austrian governments” (No. 69);

that Austria at first declined even this method of negotiation (Nos. 74, 78); but, immediately afterwards, changed her mind and proceeded with the negotiations (No. 84) suggested by Germany; and that Sir Edward Grey said

“that an agreement arrived at direct between Austria and Russia would be the best possible solution” (No. 84).

### War-Preparedness

The prime predisposing cause of the war being racial hatred and distrust, the second is to be found in international preparedness for war. The negotiations were interrupted by mobilisations — each blaming the other. Austria could not stay and allow Servia to prepare. Russia, consequently, would not delay. And Germany dared not delay — “She had speed, and Russia had the numbers”, said her minister (No. 138).

Capacity for immediate war operations rendered impracticable, and almost impossible, the acceptance of Sir Edward Grey’s plea for further time for negotiation. When troops are ready for the frontier, and initial success depends upon the advantage of a few hours, no nation will, or perhaps ought to, trust the other to remain rigidly inactive. In this very instance Germany complained that Russia “in spite of its pledged word” had prosecuted her preparations. Keep the military machines ready for instant work, and their instantaneous action will make ridiculous the continuation of the most promising negotiations. There can be little doubt that had the diplomats, in the



present case, had another quiet week, the war offices would have had nothing to do. Within the week the Belgian frontier was crossed.

### Alliances and British Intervention

The modern system of huge European alliances (the third predisposing cause of the war) is responsible for the embroilment of Germany and France. Germany was bound to help Austria. France was bound to help Russia. And the United Kingdom — how did she become involved? The British divines say that it “arose directly out of the question of the neutrality of Belgium”; but that is not a very fair statement. There can be no doubt that Germany, in invading Belgium, was guilty of as monstrous a crime as the world has ever witnessed; and there can be no doubt that that act solidified and unified British opinion as to the advisability of participation in the war. But there is also very little doubt (1) that Sir Edward Grey did not believe that the invasion of Belgium necessarily involved his country; and (2) that, had there been no such invasion, the event would have been unchanged.

In conversation with the French ambassador (31 July) Sir Edward Grey said:

“The preservation of the neutrality of Belgium might be, *I would not say a decisive*, but an important factor, in determining our attitude” (No. 119).

On 1 August (war was declared on the 4th) Sir Edward Grey said to the German ambassador

“that the reply of the German government with regard to the neutrality of Belgium was a matter of very great regret, because the neutrality of Belgium affected feeling in this country . . . if there were a violation . . . it would be *extremely difficult to restrain public feeling* in this country” (No. 123).

The German ambassador asked Sir Edward (as Sir Edward says)

“if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgium neutrality, would we engage to remain neutral. I replied that *I could not say that*: our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude should be. All I could say was that our attitude *would be determined largely by public opinion here*, and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here” (Ibid).

Relating an interview with the French ambassador (2 August), Sir Edward said:

“He asked me what we should say about the violation of the neutrality of Belgium. I said that was a much more important matter; *we were considering* what statement we should make in parliament to-morrow — in effect, whether we should declare violation of Belgian neutrality to be a *casus belli*” (No. 148).

*Had Sir Edward thought that invasion of Belgium NECESSARILY entailed British intervention, he would not have used the language above quoted.* He would have said, neither that the question was being

considered, nor that his action "would be determined largely by public opinion." And he certainly would not, the next day (3 August) in parliament, have quoted the following extract from one of Mr. Gladstone's speeches:

"There is, I admit, the obligation of the treaty. It is not necessary, nor would time permit me, to enter into the complicated question of the nature of the obligations of that treaty; but I am not able to subscribe to the doctrine of those who have held in this house what plainly amounts to an assertion, that the simple fact of the existence of a guarantee is binding on every party to it, irrespectively altogether of the particular position in which it may find itself at the time when the occasion for acting on the guarantee arises. The great authorities upon foreign policy to whom I have been accustomed to listen, such as Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, never to my knowledge took that rigid, and, if I may venture to say so, that impracticable view of the guarantee. The circumstances that there is already an existing guarantee in force is of necessity an important fact, and a weighty element in the case to which we are bound to give full and ample consideration. There is also this further consideration, the force of which we must all feel most deeply, and that is, the common interests against the unmeasured aggrandisement of any power whatever."

There can be little doubt that we should have joined in the war whether Belgium had or had not been invaded. Sir Edward, as will have been observed, would give no pledge to the contrary, and the revelations of his speech (Aug. 3) and the White Book make sufficiently clear what course the government would have adopted. Notice the following:—

1. The entente cordiale with France did not include definite promises of support, but it led to co-operation in military preparation based upon the assumption that a German attack upon France would be followed by Britain's support of her friend (No. 105).

2. The same understanding had, for some years, regulated the disposition of the British and French fleets (No. 105).

3. Prior to the invasion of Belgium, Sir Edward had promised France that

"if the German fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea, to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping, the British fleet will give all the protection in its power" (No. 148).

4. Referring to a German offer (July 29, No. 85) Sir Edward Grey said (No. 101):—

"What he asks us in effect is to engage to stand by while French colonies are taken and France is beaten, so long as Germany does not take French territory as distinct from the colonies. From the material point of view such a proposal is unacceptable, for France, without further territory in Europe being taken from her, could be so crushed as to lose her position as a great power, and become subordinate to German policy. Altogether apart from that, it would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover."

Mr. Asquith used somewhat the same language in parliament (Aug.

3); and the conclusion is inevitable that had Belgium been left alone, we should nevertheless have joined in the war.

It may be said that the United Kingdom stood aside in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and that she might have done so again. But the situation had entirely changed. In 1870, united Germany had not come into existence, and of Prussia there was no dread; Prussia's navy was inconsiderable, and there had been no German scares; pan-Germanism had not been heard of, and "velt-politik" was still in the future. In 1870, national animosities and suspicions between the two empires had not arisen. In 1914, they permeated all ranks of both nations. Why? Why could not both have been reasonable? I don't know. Ask Ireland and the school board again? It was the fault of the other fellow. It always is.

### The Future

These, then, are the causes of the war. The murder of Francis Ferdinand was the single precipitating cause. If it had not happened some other incident would have produced the same result. And the predisposing causes were (1) national and racial antipathies, (2) huge alliances, and (3) preparedness for war.

What hope is there for better conditions in the future? For Europe, I confess that I am pessimistic. I see no chance for any abatement in national and racial antipathies, and while those exist we shall have alliances and preparations. Until scholarly men, in such countries as England and Germany, can make some approach to common comprehension of patent facts, and to fair appreciation of different viewpoints, there can be little ground for expectation of the arrival of that international good-feeling in which disturbing incidents easily dissolve and rapidly disappear.

*It is said that German militarism must be crushed. And leave British navalism? Germany must be reduced to helplessness. And leave Russia and France powerful? No, that will not do, for two very good reasons: (1) Peace arranged upon a dishonouring basis would be but the merest pretence of a truce; and (2) in a very few years, we may wish that Germany was strong enough to help us against Russia or (less probably) against France. It is not very long since Russia was the enemy; since Kipling's poem of "the bear with hands like a man"; since Chamberlain's impeachment of her treachery — "who sups with the devil must have a long spoon"; since Chamberlain's proposal for the triple alliance of the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany (An. Reg. 1899, p. 227); and since the British-Japanese treaty, having for its object the enfeebling of Russia (Jan. 30, 1902).*

There can be no permanency in arrangements which involve enforced limitations upon the sovereign power of any great nation within its geographical limits. The treaty of 1856 prohibited warships in the Black Sea, and "military-maritime arsenals" on its coasts; and the treaty of 1878 prohibited the fortification of Batoum. The prohibitions lasted until Russia was in position to disregard them. No virile nation will, or ought to, stand degradation.

But why should not Europe unite against the common enemy and keep her in subjection? Read the record of the peace negotiations after Napoleon's defeats, of the Holy Alliance, and of other European concerts, and you will see. *Europe may unite, but it will not stay united. New arrangements, new alignments, new friendships — and half Europe may wish Germany strong again.*

### Peace Societies

From the work of peace societies, I expect very little immediate result. Their principle and their very great value is educative. At the end of many ages, man finally forgot (or nearly so) to associate private wrong with physical retort. He learned to associate it with judicial accommodation. And further experience of the futility of political force may in the end produce a similar international result. Peace societies help to teach us that during peace we ought to prepare our minds, not for war but for arbitration. We shall learn the lesson slowly.

### Hellish Doctrine

This horrible war may help us. Militarists, like Bernhardt in Germany, and in England Harold Wyatt (one of the honorary lecturers on The Unity of the Empire, and envoy of the Navy League to the Colonies) and military journals in Germany, England and even Canada, have been teaching devil's doctrine. The Englishman recently said : —

“Victory in war is the method by which, in the economy of God's providence, the sound nation supersedes the unsound. The truth is that armaments are the reflexion of the national soul. The immense naval and military strength of Germany is the reflex of moral and social conditions better than our own” (*Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1914, pp. 493-9).

Peace societies are of little service during war and while the tiger-blood is boiling. Their usefulness is during the peace which they desire. At the conclusion of the present war, they must redouble their efforts — not by denunciation of all military preparation, but by efforts at elimination of such hellish doctrine as that above quoted. Some of the incidents of the present war will help us to determine whether it is true that Germany's military strength is a reflex of her higher morality, or whether devotion to militarism does not create a bullying contempt for the plainest rules of the most elementary morality.

Into the country of a peaceful and friendly nation, Germany, not only without semblance or pretence of excuse but publicly and shamelessly admitting her guilt, carried death, desolation and destruction. Abominable outrages upon non-combatants she defended upon the ground that some of the unfortunates or some others (immaterial, she said, which — the community must answer for the individual) had in their misery and exasperation dared to assault German soldiers. To these poor people Germany ruthlessly applied and exaggerated the laws of war. To themselves, they held the rules of morality inapplicable.

We object to German militarism. *But German militarism is only militarism carried into perfect efficiency. The thing, and not the perfection of the thing, is the enemy.* Its extermination will be difficult. Present experience will surely bring it into more general abhorrence. And as upon the defeated the lesson will be most deeply impressed, the impartial world must and does wish us well. There is much in Cardinal Newman's maxim, "Securus judicat orbis terrarum — the wide world judges correctly".

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